

EXAMINING HOW WE EDUCATE: PROMOTING SPIRITUAL FORMATION  
AND THE PRACTICE OF THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES  
IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **EXAMINING HOW WE EDUCATE: PROMOTING SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND THE PRACTICE OF THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

by  
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This project addressed Dayspring Family Church’s reliance on the traditional knowledge-based educational approach to teach congregants about practicing the spiritual disciplines, which are essential to spiritual formation and growth. The project’s purpose was to implement a skill-based educational program to better equip participants with methodologies to practice the spiritual disciplines independently. A qualitative research study leveraging mixed methods for data collection was implemented to examine the efficacy of the project intervention. Analysis of project data revealed that skill-based instruction effectively promoted spiritual discipline practice and increased indicators of spiritual formation in participants.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I must first acknowledge God, who has been my strength, my guide, my motivation, and my resting place throughout this doctoral journey. This work was for the upbuilding of his kingdom and for his glory. It is in him that I live, move, and have my being. The opportunity to serve him in this way has been life changing.

To United Theological Seminary, where being spirit-led and laser-focused on renewing the church is paramount, the environment, instruction, mentorship, and spiritual formation that you have provided to me has left an indelible mark on my life and ministry. I commit to fulfilling our seminary's mission following my matriculation. Thank you with all my heart.

To Bishop Kevin Dickerson and Pastor Sonjia Dickerson, the senior leaders of my church and the project context, Dayspring Family Church, thank you for your prayers, support, and trust throughout this spiritual and academic process. It has been invaluable.

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Dr. Asha Fields-Brewer, Dr. Kan'Dace Brock, and Dr. Minda Stackelhouse, who were tremendous professional associates during this endeavor to become a doctor of the Church, graciously shared their professional wisdom and expertise. Thank you for your

time, your support, and your prayers. You made me and my project better with your presence and your contribution to this chapter of my life.

Dayspring Family Church, the congregation that I am honored to serve as an ordained elder and a youth pastor, was tremendously supportive throughout my doctoral journey. Thank you for trusting me. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to learn with you and from you.

To the faculty mentors of the Builders and Bridgers: Transformational Approaches to Pastoral Leadership, Prophetic Preaching, and Spiritual Formation doctoral cohort, Dr. Donald Hilliard, Jr. and Dr. Christopher Michael Jones, the value you added to my life through your presence, passion, and pour cannot be quantified. From our immersive trip to London, where we able to explore the former home of John Wesley and attend lectures at Oxford University and King's College, to the formative Civil Rights Movement pilgrimage to Selma, Birmingham, and Montgomery Alabama, and every cohort intensive in-between. For every encouraging text message sent or phone call made, thank you. I am a better pastor, practitioner, and scholar because of you.

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Finally, to the individuals that are most dear to my heart, my husband, Prince, and my two children, Chanice and Prince II, your love, support and understanding throughout my doctoral journey are the only reason it was possible. I will be forever grateful for each

encouraging word, kind gesture, and high five you gave to help me along the way. I am the woman, wife, and mother that I am because of you.



## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to those who desire intimacy with Christ no matter the cost.  
To those who desire to reflect him more than anything and everything else. May you  
continue to seek him with all your heart. For those that seek him are found by him.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|     |                              |
|-----|------------------------------|
| ELT | Experiential Learning Theory |
| KBE | Knowledge-based education    |
| SBE | Skill-based education        |
| SBR | Skill-based resonance        |

When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The doctoral research journey and the culminating project discussed throughout the pages of this document changed me. The synergetic process embarked upon to determine the scope of the project alone created a level of insight into my life's work that I did not know was possible. This work explored the spiritual disciplines and their role in supporting believers in their spiritual formation journeys. It examined how churches can better equip those who have been called by Christ to die to themselves, take up their cross, and follow him. Given the practical nature of spiritual disciplines, churches, including the project context, that heavily rely on traditional teaching methods miss an opportunity to better align their educational approach with their intended outcome. Spiritual disciplines are not simply concepts to be understood at a theoretical level. They are actions meant to be engaged in at a practical level. Viewing this truth through my lens as a pastoral leader and teacher solidified my desire to formally examine whether and to what extent educational approach could impact the efficacy of spiritual formation ministry efforts.

The project hypothesized that if congregants participated in a skill-based educational training on key spiritual disciplines, then they would be equipped with methodologies to implement those disciplines. The research completed toward informing the hypothesis was divided into four major categories: biblical foundation research,

historical foundation research, theological foundation research, and interdisciplinary foundation research.

Chapter one details the beginnings of the project's development. Developing the synergy of my ministry journey and the needs of the project context resulted in the identification of the project's focus and thrust.

Chapter two expounds on the biblical research foundation of the project. The passage that serves as the focal text is 1 Sam. 3:1-10. In this passage, the historical narrative of Samuel, who was a boy serving the Lord at the temple under the guidance of the prophet, Eli, is shared. For the majority of the passage Samuel is described as lacking spiritual maturity since he "did not yet know the Lord."<sup>1</sup> However, a learning encounter takes place throughout the ten verses and within it we see his teacher, Eli, utilize both the traditional knowledge-based educational approach and the skill-based educational approach. This biblical model outlining the impact of a shift in educational approach provided strong support for the project foundation.

Chapter three outlines the historical research foundation of the project, the Pietist Movement. Pietists sought to inspire Lutherans in Germany to shift to a more experiential faith by emphasizing simple and pure study of the bible, repentance, holy living, a deeply personal relationship with Christ, and love and sacrifice for others.<sup>2</sup> The explorative process documented in the historical foundations chapter engages the project themes within the context of the historical movement. The ministry of key figures of the Pietist

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 3:7, *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). Hereafter, all scripture references NRSV unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Gangel and Warren Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 172.

movement, including Johann Arndt, Jacob Philip Spener, and August Hermann Francke were explored to extract insight from their lives and incorporate it into the DMin project. Specifically, Pietists posited that both individual believers and the institutional church bear the responsibility of supporting the spiritual formation of believers. Further, in support of the research hypothesis, Pietists asserted that elements of a skill-based educational approach such as practice, modeling, feedback, practical instruction, and community should be leveraged by teachers and other spiritual leaders toward that goal.<sup>3</sup>

The Pietist Movement was a dynamic and influential renewal movement that lasted for centuries but continues to impact the church even today. Given the emphasis that Pietists placed on effective means of supporting the spiritual formation of congregants in a local church setting, which is outlined in significant detail throughout that chapter, the historical foundation that the movement provides for this project was well-established.

Chapter four provides the theological research foundation of the project by engaging the theological theme of spiritual formation in significant detail. The chapter defines key theological concepts and explicates foundational doctrines that undergird spiritual formation. The chapter also provides a theological overview of the key spiritual disciplines that were engaged during project implementation.

The three key theological concepts explored in the theological foundation chapter are *imago Dei*, the Trinity and Christology. Theological foundation research demonstrated that spiritual formation is the process by which humanity restores our

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Gehrz, *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 60.

original and intended identity as *imago Dei*. This conclusion was relayed during the project course as it was a key assertion that informed participants about how the course applied to them directly and supports the goal of every believer. Research on Christology and the Trinity viewed through the lens of spiritual formation revealed that the person of Christ within the Godhead sets the pattern and is our pursuit in our journey of spiritual transformation, but that spiritual formation reflects how individuals, and humanity collectively, interact with the triune God. This theological truth was reflected in the project because it provides support for emphasizing the importance of the Holy Spirit, as a member of the Godhead, in the practice of the spiritual disciplines and in the process of spiritual formation.

Chapter five engages in a dialogue with another academic discipline providing an interdisciplinary research foundation to support the project. Fittingly, with the project's independent variable being skill-based pedagogy, Education was selected as the discipline the project would engage. Underpinning the skill-based educational approach, Experiential Learning Theory asserts that humans learn by doing and being actively involved in the learning process.<sup>4</sup> As a result, ELT informed the skill-based educational approach used in the project and is explored extensively throughout the chapter.

Chapter six introduces The REEFS Model, the formation-based educational framework I developed and implemented as an intervention. The chapter then provides a project overview outlining the project timeline, content explored, and the data collection

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<sup>4</sup> Mary McCarthy, "Experiential Learning Theory: From Theory to Practice," *Journal of Business & Economics Research* 8, no. 5 (May 2010): 136, ProQuest.



methods. The detailed data analysis process and key findings were also shared to provide insight into exactly how participant data supported the project hypothesis.

The coalescence, alignment, and coherence throughout the foundational chapters, which represent varying lenses with which to understand the problem this research seeks to address, further strengthens the conclusions drawn from the research. Project implementation confirmed the hypothesis and provided validation for the ministry model proposed.

## CHAPTER ONE

### MINISTRY FOCUS

The church continues to be a relevant and critical institution within society today, as it has been throughout history. However, in practicality, the perceived relevance, value, and necessity of the Christian church have been in steady decline. In fact, a study completed by The Pew Research Center in 2019 found that 65% of Americans identified as Christians, down from 77% reported a decade prior.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, over the past decade, the percentage of Americans who say they attend church at least once or twice per month decreased by 7%, while those who say they rarely or never attend church increased by the same amount.<sup>2</sup> As a pastoral leader called to serve the Church, statistics such as these are frustratingly disheartening.

The formula for church growth and expansion is spelled out in Matthew 28 where Jesus commissioned his disciples to go “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”<sup>3</sup> Numerous studies provide substantial evidence

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.”

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 28:19-20, *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). Hereafter, all scripture references NRSV unless stated otherwise.

that developing discipleship initiatives has a positive impact on the spiritual health of a congregation.<sup>4</sup> Discussing the relationship between discipleship and spiritual formation, Morse contends that commitment to the process of discipleship is initiated and sustained by the spiritual formation journey of every believer.<sup>5</sup> Extending from that notion, the local church must be more effective with creating an environment that promotes and sustains spiritual formation within its members.<sup>6</sup> Given the current cultural and political landscape, it is especially important that the church make disciples who are spiritually mature and capable of being effective evangelists in a post-Christian society.

The local church is the vessel in which the spiritual health of individual believers is developed and protected.<sup>7</sup> Christian leaders and educators have a responsibility to ensure that they are developing strong and healthy disciples. Those disciples are then to be equipped to work independently and interdependently to expand the reach of the local church.

For the purpose of supporting Christian leaders and educators, spiritual formation and skill-based education were explored through doctoral-level research. An action research project was then implemented to serve the needs of my context and validate an effective ministry model that other churches could replicate. The context chosen for my

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<sup>4</sup> Victor Ogundiran, "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ: Implementing an Effective Discipleship Strategy for Churches in America," (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2013), 122, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/708>.

<sup>5</sup> Marykate Morse, "Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Formation: Which Is What?," Missio Alliance, April 4, 2018, <https://www.missioalliance.org/evangelism-discipleship-and-spiritual-formation-which-is-what/>.

<sup>6</sup> Morse, "Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Formation."

<sup>7</sup> Camisha A. Chambers, *Spiritual Cultivation and Trauma Healing through Music Therapy* (DMin diss., United Theological Seminary, 2023), 4, <http://archive.org/details/camisha-a-chambers-dmin-2023>.

doctoral project was Dayspring Family Church. Dayspring Family Church, where I serve as an ordained elder and co-youth pastor to the congregation, is a family-based ministry developed with the expressed purpose of “directing families to Jesus Christ and teaching them how to be equipped and available for service in the work of the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

This chapter will describe how my ministry journey, interests, and skills relate to the needs of the context and formed the basis for the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) project. In addition, relevant personal experiences that informed the development of the project will be shared to outline the synergy between my ministry journey and the needs of the context.

## **Project Context**

### *History of the Church*

Dayspring Family Church is a non-denominational ministry founded on July 10, 1994 after Pastor Kevin Dickerson, two years prior, heard from God that he was called to pastoral ministry.<sup>9</sup> Pastor Dickerson chose the name “Dayspring” because it means “morning light” or “dawning.”<sup>10</sup> Fittingly, the ministry’s focus would be directing families to Jesus Christ, the Light, as he is able to awaken us from the darkness of sin and bring us into his marvelous light.<sup>11</sup> Over 250 community members, family members and

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<sup>8</sup> Dayspring Family Church, “Bishop Kevin K. Dickerson Biography,” Dayspring Family Church, accessed December 10, 2023, <https://dayspringfamilychurch.org/new/bishop-kevin-k-dickerson-biography/>.

<sup>9</sup> Almyra Battles, *The History of Dayspring Family Church* (Irving, TX: Dayspring Family Church, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Battles, *History of Dayspring Family Church*.

<sup>11</sup> Battles, *History of Dayspring Family Church*.

friends attended the church launch service which took place in a ballroom of a local Holiday Inn Hotel.<sup>12</sup> The following Sunday, extended family and friends returned to their home churches, and only eight people attended that service – four of which were members of the Dickerson’s immediate family. The church met in a Holiday Inn and a few other local Irving hotels for two years while slowly growing the congregation.<sup>13</sup> In the third year of its existence, while renting a temporary meeting location, Dayspring purchased seven acres of land with two existing buildings on it that totaled 15,000 square feet in size.<sup>14</sup>

Dayspring saw early success as a ministry, both spiritually and numerically. In an interview with a longtime member of the congregation who began attending the church in 1996 and asked to remain anonymous, she expressed that “sound preaching, relevant teaching, and regular outreach beyond the four walls of the church,” were key reasons for the quick growth of the ministry.<sup>15</sup>

### *Geography and Demographics*

Texas, the state where Dayspring Family Church calls home, has a rich self-contained yet complex history in relation to the now United States of America. Texas, like all states, was occupied for thousands of years by Native Americans, prior to an

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<sup>12</sup> Battles, *History of Dayspring Family Church*.

<sup>13</sup> Battles, *History of Dayspring Family Church*.

<sup>14</sup> Battles, *History of Dayspring Family Church*.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with a longtime church member, November 10, 2023.

invasion by Spanish conquistadors in the early sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Spain then sent many dozens of explorers who built many religious missions and established numerous military bases over the course of the next two centuries.<sup>17</sup> The Spanish missions involved concerted efforts to convert Native Americans to Catholicism and encourage their assimilation to Spanish life.<sup>18</sup> The overt and significant influence of religion and the Church began early on in Texas history. Around 1821, American colonization of Texas began in earnest when prominent Texas historical figure, Stephen F. Austin, secured approval of a grant from the Spanish government to settle 200,000 acres in Texas.<sup>19</sup>

Soon thereafter, thousands of American settlers descended upon Texas. Austin attempted to enforce a Spanish ban on all other religions that required all new Texas residents to convert to Catholicism. However, due to the forceful nature of the approach, in addition to other social and political factors, religious apathy began to seep into the settlements.<sup>20</sup> There was a deeply held desire for religious freedom to prevail in Texas given the centrality of that right to the American experiment. In response to this, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Jewish preachers began to move to Texas and organize the first churches of their kind.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “History of Texas,” Britannica, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Texas-state/History>.

<sup>17</sup> “History of Texas.”

<sup>18</sup> “Religion in Early Texas,” Texas Almanac, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.texasalmanac.com/articles/religion-in-early-texas>

<sup>19</sup> “History of Texas.”

<sup>20</sup> “Religion in Early Texas.”

<sup>21</sup> “Religion in Early Texas.”

As organized religion in Texas saw exponential growth, on the political front, Texas moved toward independence from Mexico via the Texas Revolutionary War. Texas won the war and became an independent Republic in 1835.<sup>22</sup> However, with little financial resources and social infrastructure, as well as the need to spend most of the Republic's resources on active military defense, the Church was the only institution that could step in and meet many of the needs of the newly established Republic.<sup>23</sup> This unique aspect of Texas history is a primary reason that religious influence became so prominent and continues to be central to Texan life and culture. The Church established Texas' first educational institutions, childcare facilities, social service agencies and even newspaper outlets.<sup>24</sup>

The Church continues to have a large presence and footprint in Texas, with three of the ten largest megachurches in the country being located in the state.<sup>25</sup> Pew Research Center's 2023-2024 Religious Landscape Study found that Texas was ranked the tenth highest state in percentage of adults who say religion is very important in their lives.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, a recent study found that Texas is ranked first in religious-affiliated organizations, which measured faith and religious support charities per capita and religious establishments per capita.<sup>27</sup> These statistics on the Church in Texas provide

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<sup>22</sup> "History of Texas."

<sup>23</sup> "History of Texas."

<sup>24</sup> "Religion in Early Texas."

<sup>25</sup> "10 Largest Churches in the USA - The Most 10 of Everything," Best Of, *The Most 10* (blog), February 28, 2025, <https://www.themost10.com/10-largest-churches-in-the-usa/>.

<sup>26</sup> Chip Rotolo et al., "Most and Least Religious U.S. States," *Pew Research Center*, September 16, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/09/16/how-religious-is-your-state/>.

<sup>27</sup> Luke Powers, "Most Religious States in 2025," *SmileHub* (blog), August 19, 2025, <https://smilehub.org/blog/most-religious-states/142>.

context for the geographical ministry landscape that Dayspring Family Church functions within. There is no shortage of places of worship for seekers and believers alike to consider. However, the mandate and call of every pastor is to be effective in accomplishing the Great Commission. Disciples are produced when believers who attend worship undergo spiritual formation and create more disciples.

Dayspring Family Church is located in Irving, Texas, a suburban city that sits right between the major cities of Dallas and Fort Worth. The geography of Irving would be described as mixed-urban because it is composed of thousands of businesses, hundreds of restaurants, hundreds of warehouses, thousands of residential structures, an 8,000-seat music hall, and a 100,000 square foot convention center but also boasts 1,873 park acres and green space.<sup>28</sup> Irving is also the location of the sprawling Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, which has served as a central hub for the metropolitan area throughout state history. The neighborhood that Dayspring Family Church is located in is primarily made up of commercial-use buildings. The church is situated off of Belt Line Road, a major roadway that traverses the entire city.

Establishing the ministry context in the city of Irving was an intentional decision by Pastor Dickerson, as a means to be able to reach and serve as much of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex as possible. In the region comprising the twenty-five mile radius around Dayspring Family Church, 42% of the population is White, non-Hispanic, 31% is Hispanic/Latino, 17% is Black or African American, 7% is Asian, and 3% falls in other minority categories.<sup>29</sup> Minorities make up a substantial percentage of the region, resulting

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<sup>28</sup> “About Irving,” Irving Texas, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.cityofirving.org/3276/About-Irving>

<sup>29</sup> MissionInsite, *The Executive Insite Report*, (Florence, SC: ACS Technologies, 2023), 3.



in a more diverse population than the state-wide demographics. Dayspring is predominantly Black but does have congregants with various other racial and ethnic backgrounds. An estimated 25% of the congregation is under eighteen years old, 55% between eighteen and sixty-five years old, and 20% sixty-five years old and above. Dayspring is a mid-sized congregation with an estimated 225 people attending its two Sunday worship services on average.<sup>30</sup>

Again, the church property sits on seven acres of land and hosts two properties. The main building is a two-story structure that houses a 350-seat sanctuary, a nursery, a youth and teen room, three meeting rooms, two pastoral office spaces, a prayer room, a kitchen, and administrative offices. The second building is a multi-purpose Family Life Center with nearly 7,000 square feet for youth ministry, outreach efforts, recreation, congregational fellowship, and community events.<sup>31</sup>

### *Needs Analysis*

An extensive needs analysis was completed at the church to assist in developing a relevant and effective doctoral research project. As a member of the clergy at Dayspring Family Church for over eighteen years at the time of this writing, I have witnessed the ministry throughout different seasons, observed the prominent ministry focus areas of those seasons, and served the members of the congregation through various circumstances and stages of their lives. In conducting a needs analysis, one must begin

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with a Dayspring Family Church usher board leader, December 14, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Battles, *History of Dayspring Family Church*.

with a review of the current state and strengths of the individual or entity being analyzed. This task was completed for the project context. Dayspring has many strengths that are instrumental in sustaining its health and impact. First, the church has primary ministry areas that are thriving and consistent. These areas include community outreach, effective corporate worship, and sound biblical preaching. The ministry provides regular meals for those less fortunate in the community through our permanent food bank and conducts regular outreach to the homeless population. Additionally, Dayspring hosts large-scale outreach events such as an annual Thanksgiving outreach, where the church provides Thanksgiving dinner and spiritual support to 3000 families and the Summer Feeding Program where thousands of meals are served at apartment complexes during the summer to children who may not have any other nutritious meal that day.

Secondly, Sunday worship experiences are inspiring and spiritually nurturing for those who attend. There are consistent opportunities to hear biblically sound teaching and powerful preaching during weekly corporate gatherings. Finally, Dayspring has a friendly and familial atmosphere that reflects the “family” in the church’s name and cultivates an environment where community is possible.

Transitioning to the need identified in the context, a close observation of the congregational make-up of Dayspring revealed that there is a small but steady percentage of new members attending services and engaged in the ministry at any given time. Visitors are attracted to the ministry, and a portion of those visitors decide to join the church community. However, the average number of active congregants serving and regularly attending worship also remains steady, rather than increasing over the course of time. Ensuring that a higher proportion of new members become engaged, maturing and

effective disciples is an area of opportunity and challenge for the church. The analysis revealed a need for the church to establish an effective and substantive mechanism for promoting spiritual formation.

Though our six-week class for new members provides a solid orientation to the Christian faith and to Dayspring Family Church and Sunday School provides an opportunity for congregants to explore key biblical texts, a ministry focused on increasing the spiritual formation of every individual congregant was a clear need. Ideally, that ministry or approach to ministry would enable the equipping and maturing of individual members in a way that develops a thirst for intimacy with Christ, maintains the motivation to mature in established members, and discourages contentment and complacency in long-time members.

To further explicate the need of the context, the church's self-image was explored and identified. Dayspring Family Church is known as a ministry that serves its community and consistently functions as the hands and feet of Jesus. In *Studying Congregations*, Ammerman discusses self-images that congregations have regarding their role in their community.<sup>32</sup> The five self-images include the "prophet", the "pillar", the "servant", the "survivor", and the "pilgrim."<sup>33</sup> Dayspring's undeniable congregational self-image as a "servant" to their community is a necessary foundation as the church continues to pursue its vision of directing families to Jesus.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 75.

<sup>33</sup> Ammerman, *Studying Congregations*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> Ammerman, *Studying Congregations*, 75.

For numerous years I have served as an administrator for one of the church's annual Christian education initiatives, an eight-week congregation-wide Vacation Bible School. Three years prior to the time of this writing "spiritual gifts" was selected as the theme of the event. Many attendees expressed excitement and curiosity during sessions as the theme allowed them to explore and embrace their unique spiritual gifts in a substantive way. During many of the youth and adult sessions, it was communicated by both direct self-report and indirect observation, that many congregants do not engage in spiritual disciplines regularly nor feel that they can hear from God directly about their lives, both indicators of spiritual formation and maturity. This was observed in members who have been members of the congregation for varying lengths of time. However, many congregants reported a desire to mature spiritually through various mechanisms and opportunities that the vacation bible school provided.

Looking retrospectively at this congregational study and contextual needs analysis, the analysis was effective at developing a clear picture of the local context within the larger context. For example, the exploration of how the history of Texas and religion's strong influence on the people who live here influences ministry leaders at Dayspring Family Church. They are aware of the importance of the Church to the people in our community. Different locales and states have different experiences in this regard. Separately, taking a closer look at the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, where Dayspring is centrally located, provided insights into notable service gaps as well as opportunities we may have before us that we can leverage for Kingdom impact. Finally, the analysis enabled me to draw fresh perspective about the practices of the present ministry, increased insight into the areas where Dayspring Family Church can serve as a

model for other ministries, as well as clarity regarding the areas where we have not begun to tap into what could be possible.

Given that the congregation had a need and demonstrated preparedness for change around spiritual formation, it was selected as the project theme.<sup>35</sup> However, synergy between the needs of the context and my ministry journey ultimately informed the chosen intervention and approach to the project. In the next section of this chapter, I will expound on how my ministry journey, experiences, skills, and interests intersect with the needs of the ministry context.

### **Ministry Journey**

My roots stem from the church, with my parents having met at church as teens, and my mother having grown up a “preacher’s kid.” She traveled from city to city as my grandfather’s pastoral assignments shifted. Similarly, I traveled from city to city as my father’s military station assignments shifted beginning right after my parents married. Regular moves to new cities and new schools were early opportunities to develop adaptability and resilience. When I was six years old, we moved to Fort Hood in Texas, which ended up being my dad’s final station. We grew up in a modest home in a small town right outside of the military base in a lower middle-class neighborhood. In my younger years, while dad was still active in the military, our home was quite rigid and strict. We were routinely expected to wake up to go on two-mile runs and complete calisthenics with my dad as the drill sergeant. Athleticism and academic excellence were

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<sup>35</sup> Carlo C. DiClemente and Mary M. Velasquez, “Motivational Interviewing and the Stages of Change,” in *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*, eds. William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 210.

expected. However, serving the Lord was also a given. The earliest memories I have of church are from about seven years old when I was a part of the “Young People’s Department” at our local African Methodist Episcopal Church. My early involvement in church created opportunities for me to develop a personal relationship with God. Besides doing things for God, I had daily experiences as a young person where I noticed him in my everyday life and sensed being in his presence when worshipping. At the age of twelve, during a revival, I felt the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit, walked down the aisle during the “call to discipleship” and accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

Once I gave my life to Christ, going to church became more personal and purposeful. I began to see God’s hand on my life. Around this time, I would sometimes hear God’s still voice when I would pray and engage in other spiritual disciplines. The pace of my spiritual formation at that early age seemed to trigger a spiritual attack within just months of being saved. Three days after I turned thirteen years old, my father’s best friend broke into our home around three o’clock in the morning and sexually assaulted me in the queen-sized bed that I shared with my little sister.

In the year following that traumatic event, significant soul-searching took place, and I asked God many questions. One distinct question asked whether God would heal my heart if I dared to run toward him rather than away from him despite deep feelings of betrayal. I immediately felt an assurance in my spirit. So, at fourteen years old I decided to serve God without any reservation and rob the enemy of his attempt to thwart the call on my life due to the trauma I had endured. During my high school years, I began doing evangelism on campus. I co-founded a student club that required approval from the school principal, given its ministry focus, called “Firewall.” At our weekly afterschool

club meetings, I taught a bible study lesson to fellow students and facilitated intercessory prayer for our school. This period was when I began to sense a call to the ministry. Two years later, at sixteen years old, I spoke to my pastor, let him know that I had accepted my call to ministry, and I was given a license to preach the Gospel.

As I continued my ministry journey and grew into a young adult, I engaged heavily in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, bible study, journaling, worship, fasting, service, solitude, and chastity. The fruit of spiritual formation became evident in the closeness I felt to God and in how the Holy Spirit empowered me to minister hope, healing, and deliverance to people in my local community as well as overseas on the mission field. A ministry trip to Sierra Leone, West Africa at nineteen years old was especially formative. The Lord provided an opportunity for me to minister to hundreds of young people and to preach on foreign soil.

Following that trip, spiritual disciplines—specifically bible study and prayer journaling—became a central part of my day-to-day life, thus invigorating my spiritual health. I was experiencing such an intimacy with Christ in my life that my friends and Christian classmates began to inquire about it. This created natural opportunities to teach and mentor my peers about the practicalities of engaging in the spiritual disciplines that can lead to a closer bond with Christ.

Unfortunately, a few weeks into the fall semester of my third year in college, my life was uprooted by another instance of sexual assault, this time by a spiritual leader that I knew and trusted. After that assault, I was not the same young woman I was prior. The betrayal was devastating. Severe depression and acute trauma response symptoms set in immediately. All of my routines were disrupted. Sleeping, eating, studying, working, and

just being present were suddenly difficult tasks to complete. My spiritual health was the poorest it had ever been.

However, after six months of being consumed by trauma symptoms, detached, and disconnected, I called out to God and asked him to deliver me from the condition and state that I was in. He graciously began to give me wisdom and guidance on how to begin the process. I did not realize it at the time, but God's prescription to heal me was a heavy dose of spiritual disciplines. The first spiritual discipline that I was led to engage in was solitude. He led me to leave my environment to spend time alone with him. I listened and took a road trip so that I could clear my head. The solitude naturally led to the spiritual discipline of silence. In the silence, I was able to hear God's still small voice again for the first time since I was assaulted. Once my line of communication with God was re-established, what seemed like spiritual muscle memory set in, and I began to eagerly practice the spiritual disciplines again. A transformative phase of spiritual formation that led to complete healing transpired over the next few months.

Restored and hopeful about the future again, I pressed forward with my education. Graduating with a bachelor's degree in social work the next year and earning a Master of Science in Social Work degree two years later. Graduate-level social work degree programs empower students with knowledge of human behavior and development and key skills such as treating mental illness, research and evaluation, program management, project planning and implementation, training, skill-building, change management, policy management, supporting marginalized groups and individuals, as well as effective collaboration skills necessary to accomplish change.



My professional career has evolved over time with each role and assignment building on the prior one. In the earlier years of my career, I worked as a licensed master social worker providing direct care to individuals and families experiencing crisis, recovery, or chronic health challenges. I did this work in a variety of settings including in-home hospice, nursing homes, hospitals, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and “in the field” completing home visits in underserved communities. From a ministry standpoint, during this same period, I began serving on the ministerial staff at Dayspring Family Church and was primarily engaged in youth ministry, young adult ministry, and was an assistant to the executive pastor.

Eventually, after sensing a call to more senior leadership, I began to make a shift in my career and ministry. I went to seminary to further my theological studies and enhance my preparedness for ministry. Career-wise, I went from providing direct social work services at the individual level to functioning as an organizational leader focused on process improvement, team development, and program management.

Currently, as an administrator in digital healthcare organizations, I have the responsibility of managing the engagement, performance, and operations for large networks of healthcare providers. Managing provider networks involves program development, evaluation, policy development, change management, mass communication strategy and implementation, collaboration with cross-functional stakeholders, people management, and strategic leadership. Similar to the needs analysis completed for the doctoral project, one of my primary tasks involves identifying skill and education gaps within the provider network and developing training or enrichment programs to help fill

those gaps. This empowers our organization with a skilled workforce that can meet the needs of those they serve in the rapidly changing healthcare landscape.

Transitioning into organizational leadership within the digital healthcare industry allowed me to leverage transferable skills gained in ministry, and vice versa. To further my organizational leadership skill-development, I earned a business management certification from Harvard Business School as well as a coaching certification.

Around the same time that I shifted to more executive leadership roles in my secular work, the nature of my ministry work made a similar shift. I began supporting Dayspring Family Church senior leadership with planning and administrative efforts, leading church-wide educational content and programming initiatives, and engaging in corporate preaching and teaching more frequently. There is an undeniable overlap between my ministry journey, professional skills, and the current needs of our context, which will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

### **Synergy Development**

As I reflected on my spiritual formation journey, solidified my understanding of skill-based learning through extensive literature review, and extrapolated the synergy between my work inside and outside the walls of my local church, my calling as a transformational leader and educator became clear. Considering that convergence, for my doctoral research, I chose to examine the impact of utilizing a skill-based educational approach on the spiritual formation of adults in a congregational setting.

The needs of my context aligned with this topic given the gap that existed in the area of spiritual formation ministry. As mentioned earlier, since its founding the vision of

Dayspring Family Church has been to teach believers “how to be equipped and available for service in the work of the Lord.”<sup>36</sup> This doctoral project aimed to implement an evidence-based transformational approach to further that vision. This examination also aligned with my personal, ministerial, and professional skills. Each of the skills described below served the needs of my context and support the planning, development, and implementation of the doctoral project.

### *Organizational Change Management*

When initiating the doctoral project and beginning to recruit participants, the best practices around communicating the need for change, enlisting key stakeholders, involving the congregation in the change process where appropriate, and inserting change management strategies throughout the duration of the project were leveraged to ensure lasting impact. The considerable experience with planning, implementing, and managing organizational changes gained over the course of a career supported this component of project implementation.

### *Administration and Oversight*

Building appropriate data infrastructure, tools, resources, and teams to administer a program or service was essential for implementing a project of this nature. Leaning on my experience administering programs serving hundreds of thousands of clients equipped me to effectively administer the doctoral project in my context. Additionally, insight and

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<sup>36</sup> Dayspring Family Church, “Bishop Kevin K. Dickerson Biography.”

learnings gained from overseeing church-wide Christian education programming also informed project implementation.

### *Training Development and Curriculum Design*

In both secular and ministry contexts, I have designed multiple comprehensive, well-researched, and creative curricula that effectively met the respective learning objectives. Training content developed has spanned numerous topics and industries, successfully closed skill gaps in the learners, improved quality, increased measurement-based outcome scores, and supported spiritual, emotional, or mental health transformation. This experience was utilized when developing the skill-based curriculum for project implementation.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

As a digital healthcare organizational leader responsible for process improvement and operations management, leveraging data is an important aspect of that work. Identifying data collection tools, developing data pipelines, analyzing substantial amounts of data, and visualizing findings in a way that can be understood by varying audiences are routine. In this doctoral project, quality data collection tools and analysis methodologies were utilized to extract insights and communicate them in a compelling way.

### *Teaching and Public Speaking*

Communication is a skill honed over the course of my life through preaching and teaching ministry, formal education, and continued professional development. I have taught in both corporate and ministry settings while utilizing numerous educational pedagogies. In recent years, I have been responsible for implementing ongoing educational programming for employees in the healthcare technology industry, which relies on a skill-based approach for employee learning and development.

### *Spiritual Disciplines*

Engaging in the spiritual disciplines has been an important practice and habit in my life since my teenage years. I have relied on them in my personal walk with the Lord and spiritual formation journey. Spiritual formation was also significant component of my graduate and post-graduate theological studies, equipping me to support my context in learning about the tools given to believers to facilitate spiritual growth.

### *Counseling*

With over nineteen years of experience in the mental health field at the time of this writing, I leveraged counseling tools and techniques to support the implementation of this project. Specifically, implementing skill-based instructional elements such as managing group dynamics, facilitating activities such as reflection and practice during sessions, and sustaining an environment that is emotionally safe for participants was supported by my experience.

Ultimately, the synergy between the needs of the ministry context, my ministry journey, and personal attributes informed the nature of the doctoral project. Once that was established, extensive research was completed to establish a solid foundation on which to build. The primary pillar of that foundational research was the biblical foundation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the historical narrative found in 1 Sam. 3:1-10. The exegetical process documented in this chapter provides a thorough exploration of the project themes: spiritual formation and educational approach. The focal passage narrates the spiritual formation journey of Samuel who, as a boy, did not yet know the Lord. Readers learn how Eli, who as a priest is representative of institutional religion, eventually helped guide Samuel to God and accelerate his spiritual maturity.<sup>1</sup> First Samuel 3:1-10 serves as the biblical foundation for this doctoral project as an examination and interpretation of Eli's approach to teaching and mentoring Samuel, informs the hypothesis of the project.

The chapter begins with a contextual analysis of the passage. First, we explore the larger context, which includes the background and significance of the book of 1 Samuel, the historical and cultural implications, and the role of the focal pericope within the book of 1 Samuel. The chapter then reviews the immediate context, which narrows the focus to the important considerations, commentary, and events that occur in the chapters immediately preceding and following the focal passage.

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<sup>1</sup> Gnana Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations: A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 38.

This chapter will then provide a formal analysis, which involves examining the literary form, key literary elements, movement, and structure of the text. This section of the chapter includes an outline of 1 Sam. 3:1-10 which then serves as a guide for the provided analysis. The analysis section details the close reading of each significant text segment of the passage utilizing a dynamic, comprehensive, and deliberate approach, in order to interpret the meaning, implications, and application of the passage.

Lastly, the synthesis and conclusion section will summarize the key biblical insights extracted through the exegetical process. Those insights provide a foundation for and undergird this doctoral project. The text's implications and its alignment with the central message of the Gospel will be outlined which will assist in completing a full hermeneutical circle.

## **Contextual Analysis**

### *Overview of First Samuel*

Before delving into the focal passage, it is necessary to explore the larger context surrounding the passage, which is the book of 1 Samuel itself. First Samuel is an important book within the canon of scripture, narrating consequential bible stories and outlining the lives of prominent biblical figures such as Samuel, Saul, and David. The books of First and Second Samuel were originally one book but due to its size was likely better accommodated by two scrolls in the ancient Hebrew context.<sup>2</sup> The book of 1

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<sup>2</sup> Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 276, ProQuest Ebook Central.



Samuel functions as a link between two differing systems of governance; the time of the judges and the time of the kings.<sup>3</sup> The following is an outline of the major sections of 1 Samuel that provides insight into the phases of the linkage process:

- I. Story of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1-4:1)
- II. The Ark Narrative (1 Sam. 4:2-7:2)
- III. Moving towards a Monarchy (1 Sam. 7:3-8:22)
- IV. Samuel and King Saul (1 Sam. 9:1-15:34)
- V. King Saul, Samuel, and King David (1 Sam. 16:1-31:13)

Samuel plays a significant role in each of the major sections of the book. Through his lens and perspective, readers witness the complex political, spiritual, and social realities of the Israelite people during a critical period of history. Given its historical significance, it is important to explore how the text was preserved over the course of time and any implications it has for our examination.

### *Textual Criticism*

The “Masoretic Text” of 1 and 2 Samuel has come under criticism by many scholars regarding its quality and accuracy.<sup>4</sup> In particular, it has gone through transcriptional corruption and contains considerable instances of unintelligible spelling and grammatical issues.<sup>5</sup> In light of this, scholars, to correct what are considered to be scribal errors, have relied upon other ancient versions of the text, including the

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<sup>3</sup> David T. Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 37, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>4</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 20.

Septuagint and three Qumran Hebrew texts of Samuel.<sup>6</sup> First Samuel is a Hebrew text, and thus the Masoretic Text has significant comparative value in the process from translation to interpretation.<sup>7</sup> David Tsumura argues that many of the revisions made from the Masoretic Text of Samuel are unnecessary given that the perceived corruption of the text can actually be summed up as phonetic spellings of words, use of idiomatic expressions, and use of words that had definitions unique to the historical context in which Samuel was written.<sup>8</sup>

### *Authorship and Timing*

We do not know explicitly who wrote the books of Samuel.<sup>9</sup> Hebrew tradition associates its authorship with Samuel, Nathan, and Gad based on 1 Chron. 29:22, but that passage does not explicitly name the men as the authors of the books of Samuel, only that they compiled source materials on David.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, many scholars agree that the books of Samuel are a compilation of works by a group of scribes written after the fall of Jerusalem and during the exile of the Israelite people.<sup>11</sup> A thread that persists throughout

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<sup>6</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 22-24.

<sup>9</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 25.

<sup>10</sup> David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>11</sup> On scholars who conclude that the books of Samuel have Deuteronomistic authors see Mark A. Leuchter and David T. Lamb, *The Historical Writings: Introducing Israel's Historical Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2016), 10, Project Muse; Ralph W. Klein et al., *1 Samuel*, vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2014), 31; John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196, ProQuest Ebook Central; Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

the books and throughout an even larger segment of historical scripture, Joshua through Kings, is what Martin Noth called a “Deuteronomistic perspective” because it drew on the principles of the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>12</sup> In the Joshua through Kings narrative, a cyclical refrain in the behaviors of the people in the Israelite camp surfaces. They fall into trouble or trial, cry out to God, receive deliverance by God, are urged by their prophet to turn to God and away from sin, and do so only to return to the beginning of the cycle. Specifically, Noth proposed that the “anti-kingship” speech by Samuel, as well as similar speeches found in Joshua and in Kings are evidence of a unified narrative among the Deuteronomistic authors.<sup>13</sup> The Deuteronomic lens continues to be the dominant approach to reading the books of Samuel.

The last event narrated by the Deuteronomists is dated around 560 BC, so the book of Kings could not have been written before that time.<sup>14</sup> It is unlikely that the final composition of the larger Deuteronomist history happened after the exile.<sup>15</sup> Given these observations, the book of Samuel was likely completed during Babylonian exile between 560 and 539 BC.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Marti J. Steussy, *Samuel and His God: Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 17, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>13</sup> Steussy, *Samuel and His God*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Evans and Longman III, *1-2 Samuel*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> On the timing of the final composition of the Deuteronomist history, see Paul Evans and Tremper Longman III, *1-2 Samuel*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2018), 22, ProQuest Ebook Central; Ralph W. Klein et al., *1 Samuel*, vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2014), 31, ProQuest Ebook Central; John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196.

<sup>16</sup> Evans and Longman III, *1-2 Samuel*, 22.

### *First Samuel in the Context of the Canon*

First Samuel is named after one of its main characters rather than the author of the book. However, 1 Samuel stands out from most books in the biblical canon given that Samuel's birth and childhood are narrated in significant detail. Only Isaac and Moses are treated similarly in the entirety of the Old Testament.<sup>17</sup> Faraoanu highlights a parallelism between the description of Samuel's childhood in 1 Sam. 2:26 where we learn that 'the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people' and how Jesus' childhood is described in the New Testament in Luke 2:52.<sup>18</sup> With such a direct echo in language used to describe both Samuel and Jesus, students of the bible can draw informed conclusions around the significance of the Samuel story in the lives of those who lived during his time and in the lives of believers today.

### *Historical and Cultural Context*

What did the world look like during the time that the Deuteronomists authored the book of Samuel? How did they describe life in Israel during Samuel's prophetic call? The answers to these questions will illuminate and inform our exegesis of the text.

First Samuel is placed late in the period of the judgeship in Israel, which was around the mid-eleventh century.<sup>19</sup> During this time in Israelite history, Deuteronomists frequently summed up the state of affairs dimly: "In those days there was no king in

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<sup>17</sup> Iulian Faraoanu, "Samuel, Symbol of Discernment (1 Samuel 3)," *The Expository Times* 130, no. 3 (December 1, 2018): 101-9, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524618792237>.

<sup>18</sup> Faraoanu, "Samuel, Symbol of Discernment," 101.

<sup>19</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 91.

Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).<sup>20</sup> After hundreds of years where God appointed judges to manage his people while he reigned as their king, the Deuteronomist authors believed that the Israelites were beginning to look like the other nations that surrounded them. This would eventually lead to them demanding a king.<sup>21</sup> Samuel was the conduit God would use to transition Israel to this new phase in its history.

The Ancient Near East was also in a period of transition at the time in history discussed in 1 Samuel 3. Numerous small kingdoms, including Israel, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Philistia had formed and taken the place of great empires that preceded them such as the Egyptians and Hittites.<sup>22</sup> Israel was an isolated and unstable city-state, engulfed by syncretism, and disconnected from its God. Israel sought a stronger national identity via a human king. However, writing during the exile, the Deuteronomists wrote 1 Samuel with an understanding of what the Israelite’s rebellion against the kingship of God would eventually bring.

### *The Text within the Book*

First Samuel 3 serves as the end of the book’s introduction in which the purpose and circumstances of Samuel’s birth are narrated through the lens of his mother, Hannah, and others connected to him. This passage is a pivotal moment in the overall narrative arc of 1 Samuel. The point of view shifts from others to Samuel himself. Samuel receives an

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<sup>20</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Everett Fox, *Give Us a King!: Samuel, Saul, and David: A New Translation of Samuel I and II* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1999), xvii.

<sup>22</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 37.

audible call from the Lord, which will be expounded upon in the detailed analysis of this text, Samuel accepts the call to judgeship and his prophetic office in Israel before God. In this profound pericope the Lord “demonstrates his propensity for confounding human systems, bypassing the exalted in favor of the humble.”<sup>23</sup> For the remainder of the book, Samuel is in full maturity and serves as a causal agent in the overall story of Israel.

### *Immediate Context*

As we begin to narrow our focus to the focus text, 1 Sam. 3:1-10, it is important to review the surrounding context to ensure an accurate historical interpretation. First Samuel 2 talks about Samuel through the lens of his mother, Hannah. More specifically, we gain insight into the intimacy found in her relationship with God and her commitment to pleasing God. The biblical author narrates through a song attributed to Hannah the immense gratitude she had when blessed with a son after many years of barrenness. The song is believed to either be an adaptation Hannah made to an existing hymn or words of a Deuteronomistic author written on her behalf.<sup>24</sup> Either way, the song informs readers of Hannah’s faithful practice of the spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, stewardship, and solitude. Hannah’s spiritual walk and her evident spiritual maturity provide the immediate context for our focus text.

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<sup>23</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 84.

<sup>24</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, vol 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 45, ProQuest Ebook Central.

As 1 Samuel 2 continues, we are introduced to Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, expounding upon their complete lack of regard for the Lord.<sup>25</sup> The Deuteronomist author continually draws a sharp contrast between faithful young Samuel and the faithless sons of Eli.<sup>26</sup> The chapter concludes by foreshadowing the events of the focal text. Eli is visited by a "man of God" ('îš-'ēlōhîm), which is a synonym for 'prophet,' who gives Eli a prophetic word of warning.<sup>27</sup> God declared, through the prophet, "See, a time is coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your ancestor's family, so that no one in your family will live to old age...I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind (1 Sam. 2:31, 35). In this stark and critical prophesy Eli is chastised by the prophet about his two sons' behavior and is informed about God's disappointment with him and his family line. A surface-level reading would prompt a reader to condemn Eli quite summarily. However, consideration of the immediate context of the passage is warranted to fully grasp the lessons we can learn from Eli. Marti Steussy argues that,

The Lord says in [1 Sam. 3:13] that Eli's 'sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.' But according to the previous chapter, Eli did make a spirited attempt to restrain his sons. They refused to listen, but the reason given is not that Eli has been lax in his exhortation. Rather we are told that 'they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the Lord to kill them' (2:23-25). The Lord condemns Eli for the sons' failure to reform, but the narrative has already named the Lord's intervention as their reason for persisting in sin.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Sam. 2:12, *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). Hereafter, all scripture references NRSV unless stated otherwise.

<sup>26</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 118.

<sup>27</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 127.

<sup>28</sup> Steussy, *Samuel and His God*, 2.

The claim that Eli is an incompetent priest has significant justification.<sup>29</sup> However, the apparent conflict outlined in the quote above highlights the reality that the text invites a consideration of the values and virtues of Eli that could be an example for spiritual mentors, teachers, and leaders. After all, despite it being God's will to kill Eli's sons and raise up Samuel, Eli did try, though unsuccessfully, to redirect his sons, he trained Samuel to become his replacement, and humbly accepted God's will as it related to the destruction of his family's priestly mandate. It was also Eli's practical guidance on a spiritual discipline and posture, that ultimately equipped Samuel with the skills he needed to position himself for spiritual formation, hear directly from God and accept his call as the last judge of Israel.

Immediately following the focal passage, Samuel receives an audible word from the Lord about the dismal fate of Eli's family (1 Sam. 3:11) and "Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli" (1 Sam. 3:15). Given the nature and content of the oracle, it is reasonable that Samuel found it a challenging message to relay to the man who had been like a father to him. However, Eli strongly encouraged Samuel to say exactly what the Lord had said, even sharing that there may be divine consequences if he fails to do so. Despite having his own issues to be concerned about, Eli took a moment to provide Samuel with practical knowledge and guidance to carry out his assignment, coaching "Samuel to become the kingmaker and king-unmaker he will later be."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Marvin Sweeney, "Eli: A High Priest Thrown under the Wheels of the Ox Cart," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, First edition, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (Bloomsbury Publishing: NY, 2020), 66, <http://www.bloomsburycollections.com/collections/monograph>.

<sup>30</sup> Francesca Aran Murphy et al., *1 Samuel*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 60, ProQuest Ebook Central.



First Samuel 4:1 functions as a link between the events occurring at the end of chapter three and the next section of the book of Samuel, “The Ark Narrative,” as the narrative transitions to discussing the Israelite battle against the Philistines and the role the ark played in the conflict.<sup>31</sup> Given how poorly the sons of Eli had been handling the holy things of God’s house in Israel, “The Ark Narrative,” though seemingly unrelated, is relevant to the ongoing narrative in the book of 1 Samuel. First Samuel 4 outlines the Philistines’ capture of the ark and the death of Eli once he learns of the ark’s capture. With Eli’s death, Samuel becomes the primary judge of the Israelites, thus completing the story arc of the immediate context surrounding our focus passage.

### Formal Analysis

#### *Literary Form*

First Samuel falls into the historical narrative literary genre and involves ancient history-writing.<sup>32</sup> The biblical text in focus, 1 Sam. 3:1-10, has the literary form of a “prophetic call narrative” similar to Exodus 3, Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1, Ezekiel 1, and others.<sup>33</sup> In the prophetic call narrative literary form, the circumstances, discourse, conflict, content, and outcome are narrated. However, there are a couple of key distinctions in the structuring of Samuel’s prophetic call narrative. This includes the fact that the vision recorded in Samuel does not include a formal prophetic commission by

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<sup>31</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 141.

<sup>32</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 91.

<sup>33</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 131.

God and there is no initial expression of unworthiness, which are typically components of the literary form.<sup>34</sup> Thus, David Firth calls 1 Sam. 3:1-10 a “hybrid call narrative.”<sup>35</sup>

### *Literary Elements, Movement, and Structure*

Samuel is written using a simple oral literary style, as opposed to the dense or complicated style found in other biblical narratives.<sup>36</sup> A key literary element used frequently in Samuel is narrative chronology. This is used in the focal passage to chronologically guide the reader through Samuel’s call.<sup>37</sup> With the use of hypotactic narration in chapters one and two, each individual narrative builds upon the previous one.<sup>38</sup> This is helpful when interpreting the context and significance of the events occurring in the focal passage. Other key literary elements such as repetition and parallelism, are also used to establish the narrative flow within the text and help define the structure of the narrative.<sup>39</sup>

First Samuel 3:1-10 includes conspicuous guideposts that outline the movement throughout the passage. The passage begins describing the story’s starting point using words such as “now” and “meanwhile” to narrate what was the setting and circumstances of a typical night in the Shiloh temple. Eli and Samuel were in their usual places both in

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<sup>34</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 131.

<sup>35</sup> Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Leuchter and Lamb, *The Historical Writings*, 167.

<sup>37</sup> Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 28.

<sup>38</sup> Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Example text segments in 1 Samuel 3:1-10 are the phrases “Here I am,” “The Lord called,” and “lie down.”

physical location and in their state of being. Samuel laying before the Lord near the ark while Eli slept outside the sanctuary, essentially blind and disengaged. As the narrative continues numerous verses that outline the movement of the story begin with words that indicate connections between actions, such as “then,” “so,” and “again.” Repetition of certain discourse and actions serve as temporary obstacles in the narrative progression and inject tension into the plot. From a thematic perspective, the passage narrates Samuel moving from ignorance of God to intimacy with God.<sup>40</sup> First Samuel 3:1-10 includes the typical narrative structural elements including setting, rising action, and climax. The remaining elements, falling action and resolution, occur outside of the focal pericope.

The following overview of the literary structure of the focal passage serves as a guide for a detailed analysis of the major segments and components of the text:

- I. Setting and Circumstances (vv. 1-3)
- II. First Call and Reaction (vv. 4-5)
- III. Second Call and Repetition (vv. 6-7)
- IV. Third Call and Realization (v. 8)
- V. Fourth Call and Divine Connection (vv. 9-10)

### **Detailed Analysis**

#### *Setting and Circumstances (vv. 1-3)*

Typical of narrative-style writing, 1 Sam. 3:1-10 begins by providing the essential elements of a story, the setting, characters involved, and the circumstances the characters

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<sup>40</sup> Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 73.

find themselves in. Samuel, who is mentioned first and thus suggested to be the main character, is “ministering to the Lord” (1 Sam. 3:1). The word “ministering” in the context of this verse means “to serve” or “to attend as a menial or worshipper.”<sup>41</sup> Samuel was a servant of the Lord, and he attended to the temple under the leadership of Eli. He did not have notoriety or a position of influence within Israel at this time, yet God desired intimacy and relationship with him. However, during that time in history the author informs us that “the word of the Lord was rare” (1 Sam. 3:1). By mentioning this at the outset of the chapter, the author communicates that the rarity of God’s word will be a key subject of the passage. The phrase “word of the Lord,” which is *dabar* in Hebrew, is utilized repetitively in our focal passage. According to Gnana Robinson, there are fifteen instances and three different senses in which the word is utilized throughout 1 Samuel 3. Firstly, *dabar* indicates the content of the word (i.e., its purpose), and so here the revelation of God’s will: ‘And the word of the Lord was rare in those days’”<sup>42</sup> God was rarely expressing his will to the people of Israel. A people with no vision will perish (Prov. 29:18). First Samuel 3:1 is both an explanation of the problem that the author’s audience in that historical context faced and an indicator of an upcoming solution to readers today who may be experiencing a lack of insight into God’s will. Secondly, *dabar* represents “the word of the Lord as the medium of the communication of the will of God.”<sup>43</sup> It speaks to how God will accomplish his will. Finally, *dabar* also means the

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<sup>41</sup> James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: TN, Thomas Nelson, 1990), 8334.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations*, 24.

concretization or realization of the will of God.”<sup>44</sup> This is when the word of the Lord is the manifestation of the will of the Lord. As a result of dissecting the key phrase “word of the Lord,” it is clear that the movement of the focal passage is Samuel, and by extension Israel, is going from ignorance and absence of the word of the Lord to access and intimacy with the word of the Lord.

In verse two, the passage naturally shifts to Eli, the current priest and prophet of Israel, who has stewarded, ineffectively, this season of Israel’s relationship with God. We learn that in addition to him having limited spiritual visibility, he also has limited physical visibility. Eli’s physical location, in a room off the main sanctuary, is then shared in contrast with that of Samuel’s. Samuel was lying in the temple right before the ark of God. With the ark of God representing the manifest presence of God in the context of this passage, this verse prophetically foreshadows Samuel’s imminent and significant spiritual formation.

#### *First Call and Reaction (vv. 4-5)*

Verse four includes the first narration of action in the passage after three verses of commentary on the setting (1 Sam. 3:4). Notably, the Lord takes the first action. The Lord called out to Samuel. Faraoanu argues that this is worth emphasizing for exegetical purposes because “the initiative [of a calling] belongs to God, not being conditioned by any particular moral or intellectual level of the one chosen by God.”<sup>45</sup> Samuel did not earn or deserve his calling. God chose him. However, we know that Samuel’s very

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<sup>44</sup> Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> Faraoanu, “Samuel, Symbol of Discernment,” 105.

existence and dedication to the Lord was a result of his mother's prayers (1 Sam. 1:24).

Samuel's context and environment was compatible with the practice of spiritual disciplines and dedication to God which served as a mechanism of preparation for the call Samuel had on his life.<sup>46</sup>

When God called Samuel this first time, Samuel instinctively and immediately responded "Here I am" before he even knew who called him. This is evidence of his tendency to operate in quick obedience, a trait that God would depend on when he became his prophet. The first call was the only call that the text says Samuel ran to Eli in response, demonstrating the sense of urgency he had in his initial reaction.<sup>47</sup> God called Samuel from the ark, which Samuel laid right in front of.<sup>48</sup> However, Samuel, who was not unaccustomed to hearing from God, did not even consider that it was God calling him.

### *Second Call and Repetition (vv. 6-7)*

First Samuel 3:6 opens with a second call from God and Samuel running to Eli believing that it was him who called. Eli responds with almost the exact same language as the initial call, adding only "my son" (1 Sam. 3:6). This phrase could have come from a place of endearment or exasperation. The situational reality was that this second call was repetitive and redundant for Eli and Samuel. Interpreting this verse, in the temple that

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<sup>46</sup> Faraoanu, "Samuel, Symbol of Discernment," 106.

<sup>47</sup> Klein et al., *1 Samuel*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *V. The Call of Samuel (3:1-41a)*, vol. 8, 1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary (New Haven & London: The Anchor Yale Bible, 1980), <http://www.theologyandreligiononline.com/tarocol/encyclopedia-chapter>.

night and in the church today, teacher-student interactions become redundant and repetitive when they become routine and lack any revelation.

The biblical author anticipates that some context or an explanation as to Samuel's lack of awareness of God's voice is needed at this point in the passage and provides that in verse seven. We are informed that "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him" (1 Sam. 3:7). The word *dabar* reemerges for the first time since verse 1 with its use in this context relaying that the content or purpose of the will of God had not been revealed to Samuel yet.<sup>49</sup> The addition of the word "yet" is likely deliberate as it assists with contrasting Samuel and Eli's sons, who also "did not know the Lord" (1 Sam. 2:12). The "yet" infers that Samuel would know the Lord in the future, whereas Eli's sons would not. This verse explains that prior to receiving revelation of the word of God, Samuel was a believer and served in the tabernacle. However, he was a distant and stagnant servant of God.

### *Third Call and Realization (v. 8)*

God then called Samuel a third time and once again he goes to Eli believing it was him who called (1 Sam. 3:8). However, the third call became a turning point for Eli who "perceived" that it was God who had been calling Samuel (1 Sam. 3:8). The word "perceived" in this verse is *bin* in Hebrew and is defined as "to discern."<sup>50</sup> Eli was able to discern the significance of the moment and his role in it as Samuel's spiritual guide and teacher. When Eli remembered that God called Samuel and not him, he appropriately

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<sup>49</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 135.

<sup>50</sup> Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 995.

shifted from being status quo about Samuel's spiritual formation to taking an equipping and empowering approach.

*Fourth Call and Divine Connection (vv. 9-10)*

At this point in the passage, we see movement within the narrative that is accomplished with the use of the word “therefore” at the beginning of verse nine (1 Sam. 3:9). The word “therefore” here connects Eli's action in verse ten to the events of the previous verse. Eli tells Samuel to “Therefore...go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak Lord, for your servant is listening’” (1 Sam. 3:9). Eli utilized experience and wisdom he had gained throughout his years in ministry to give Samuel some practical and valuable skill-based education on how to posture oneself to hear from God. Eli served as a mentor to Samuel about prophetic ministry, even as his own future was uncertain. When Samuel implements the instructions that Eli provides, he experiences a dream theophany, or divine visitation, that catapults his spiritual formation.<sup>51</sup> God gave Samuel a prophetic mission with far-reaching political and spiritual implications. The effectiveness of Eli's approach to spiritual mentorship and education in that moment cannot be overstated. It can, however, be examined and learned from, which is the goal of this project.

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<sup>51</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 33-37, ProQuest Ebook Central.



## Conclusion

In summary, 1 Sam. 3:1-10 exemplifies the project theme of spiritual maturity and is foundational to the doctoral project because it demonstrates how spiritual formation in a congregational setting is promoted with the use of a skill-based educational approach to teach and mentor believers about spiritual disciplines. The burden that ministry leaders carry of ensuring the continuity of the Lord's church through supporting the ongoing spiritual formation of believers is a heavy one. However, in Matt. 11:28-30 Jesus says,

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

The following verse, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," elucidates the connection between spiritual formation and educational approach (Matt. 11:29a). A yoke, *zugos* in Greek, "unites two elements to work as one unit."<sup>52</sup> Allowing Jesus to put a yoke on us is yielding and conforming to him, which is the goal of spiritual formation. In this verse, Jesus tells us to not only take his yoke upon us but to also "learn of him" (Matt. 11:29a). Learning is the output of the educational process. In order to gain rest, which we can only find in Jesus, we must learn of him. Like Samuel, we must gain a revelation and understanding of the *dabar*. Importantly, the New Testament, in John 1:1, reveals that "Jesus Christ is the true Dabar, the Logos, in all three senses at once."<sup>53</sup> If the church is to bear the burden of supporting the spiritual formation of believers more effectively in

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<sup>52</sup> Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 2218.

<sup>53</sup> Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations*, 25.

today's post-Christian society, we must have an effective approach to educating believers and guiding them to God.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS**

The historical foundation chapter examines the Pietist Movement, a renewal movement that emphasized spiritual formation and Christian education as mechanisms for facilitating church reform and advancing the Gospel. The explorative process documented in this chapter engages the project themes within the context of the historical movement and examines the applicability of that intersection on both the research context and the church more broadly. Pietists posited via a vast number of contemporaneous publications, that both individual believers and the institutional church bear the responsibility of supporting the spiritual formation of believers. However, in support of the research hypothesis, Pietists also asserted that elements of a skill-based educational approach such as practice, modeling, feedback, practical instruction, and community should be leveraged by teachers and other spiritual leaders toward that goal.<sup>1</sup> This chapter provides detailed insight into key events, concepts and figures of the Pietist Movement that undergird and provide a historical foundation for the doctoral project.

The chapter begins with a section that provides an overview of the Pietist Movement. The overview includes a discussion of the origin of the movement and a review of Pietism as a platform of practices and principles. The chapter then reviews the

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Gehrz, *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 60, Kindle.

key figures of the movement, and explores their lives, ministries, and key contributions to the Pietist Movement.

This chapter continues with a section that explains important Pietist concepts that have specific relevance to the project themes. A section that clearly articulates the substantial influence and impact that the Pietist Movement had on the church during the Reformation and in the modern era follows. Finally, the chapter concludes by synthesizing the key elements of the historical movement and discussing how they informed the ideation, development, and implementation of the doctoral project.

## **Overview of the Pietist Movement**

### *Origin*

The Pietist Movement demonstrated the efficacy of Sir Isaac Newton's third law of motion, which purports that "for every action (force) in nature there is an equal and opposite reaction."<sup>2</sup> The Pietist Movement originated as a reaction to a certain climate and set of conditions occurring within the Lutheran church. After enough tension built, in line with how church renewal movements have historically proceeded, a large enough group of individuals became dissatisfied with church life and the priorities of those in religious leadership. Early Pietists were Lutherans who decided to push against the consistent force of what had become a "doctrine-heavy and head-focused" Lutheran

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<sup>2</sup> NASA, "Newton's Laws of Motion," Glenn Research Center, last modified June 27, 2024, <https://www1.grc.nasa.gov/beginners-guide-to-aeronautics/newtons-laws-of-motion/>.

Church.<sup>3</sup> Between 1580 and 1620, the Lutheran Church, which was the most prominent protestant denomination in Europe at the time, had been fixated on differentiating itself from the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup> During this time, Lutheran spiritual leaders sought to legitimize themselves by deliberating and documenting their own doctrinal stances on concepts such as the nature of justification, grace versus the law, and faith versus works.<sup>5</sup> Polemicists rather than preachers and prophets became the most prominent voices in the church. Congregants debated theological concepts rather than focus on a Christianity defined by love and devotion to God. Denominationalism, distinction, and institutional identity were being prioritized above discipleship. As a result, the period between 1580 to 1620 became coined “Protestant Scholasticism.”<sup>6</sup> The earliest Pietists notably began to surface at the beginning of the seventeenth century in response.

### *About Pietism*

The Pietist Movement was the process and result of the increasing influence, sustained impact, and transformative nature of Pietism. Pietism was composed of a distinct set of principles, perspectives, and practices that undergirded it and brought about transformation in the lives of adherents. Transformation is an effective form of marketing for any product, service, or in this instance—movement. When lives or circumstances change, those who experience the transformation become evangelists for whoever or

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<sup>3</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 72, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>4</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 72.

<sup>5</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 72.

<sup>6</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 72.

whatever is responsible for that change. The Pietist Movement facilitated a spiritual formation process for adherents that led to an active and experiential faith during the Protestant Scholasticism period and in a place, Europe, where such was not the norm.

Lutheran pastors in Europe during the mid-seventeenth century were faced with the challenge of supporting the spiritual well-being of a people who had been devastated by violence, plague and famine brought on by the Thirty Years War.<sup>7</sup> During the war, religion had become politicized and de-personalized, a direct reflection of the climate they were in. Pietism was an overt act of resistance that emphasized simple and pure study of the bible, repentance, holy living, a deeply personal relationship with Christ, and love and sacrifice for others.<sup>8</sup> Importantly, Pietism did not purport that people could live a life of true faith in their own strength. Instead, it prioritized the work of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual formation and maturity of the believer.<sup>9</sup> The devotion espoused by Pietism as well as its concept of true faith disconcerted some citizens and clergy prompting theological controversy. Outlining three components or themes of true faith from a Pietist perspective, Shantz explains that firstly, true faith is a personal faith built upon a relationship and an encounter with God rather than affiliation with a particular local church body or denomination.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, true faith is accompanied by visible change in one's life through the inward conversion of God's word into outward action that leads to

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Lund, *Documents from the History of Lutheranism, 1517-1750* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 272.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Gangel and Warren Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 172.

<sup>9</sup> Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 172.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Shantz, *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 202, ProQuest Ebook Central.

a pious life.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, an element that clearly distinguished Pietist devotion from status quo church life were devotional meetings, known as *collegia pietatis*, which were supplemental spiritual growth opportunities outside of the weekly worship service.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout history, Pietism has had a complicated reputation.<sup>13</sup> Summarily, it has been viewed by many as pioneering, prophetic, and the precursor to Evangelicalism, the modern global Protestant denomination. Conversely, in its early days it was deemed unrealistic and even radical by some of the orthodox Lutherans. A Christian faith that asked believers to focus on conforming to the image of Christ rather than on conforming to the image of a denomination invited its share of skeptics and detractors. It has been labeled by critics as overly experiential, individualistic, and neglectful of doctrine.<sup>14</sup> However, anyone who views Pietism through the lens of its original pontificators, would learn this is far from reality. In the next section we will explore Pietism through the perspective of its key figures and original pontificators who birthed, developed, and sustained the movement.

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<sup>11</sup> Shantz, *Companion to German Pietism*, 202.

<sup>12</sup> Shantz, *Companion to German Pietism*, 203.

<sup>13</sup> Christian T. Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: James Clark, 2011), 4, <https://www-jstor-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctt1cgfbkp>.

<sup>14</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 4.

## Key Figures

### *Johann Arndt*

Johann Arndt was a forerunner of the Pietist Movement. He began teaching and publishing devotional content that espoused pietist principles such as personal piety and relationship with Christ, renewal, rebirth, and the importance of introspection, before Pietism even came to be. Arndt, who would later be called the father of Lutheran Pietism, felt compelled to advocate for a Christianity that was primarily focused on love and devotion.<sup>15</sup> Despite having grown up during the Protestant Scholasticism period when the protestant church had a very orthodox and traditional bend, upon beginning his ministry around 1583 as a pastor and throughout his life, everything Arndt preached and published had to do with “spirituality and practical Christian living.”<sup>16</sup>

Arndt is best known for his work, *True Christianity*, which was first published in 1605, but by 1610 he added three additional books to that work and republished it as *Four Books on True Christianity*.<sup>17</sup> As expressed in his signature work, his central message was “God comes to us and seeks closer fellowship with us in whose souls he desires to establish His kingdom.”<sup>18</sup> The biblical passage that he drew his central theological perspective from was Luke 17:21, which reads “the kingdom of God comes not with observable things; one thus is not able to say: See here or there it is, for behold,

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<sup>15</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 76.

<sup>16</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 74.

<sup>18</sup> Carter Lindberg, *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 29, ProQuest Ebook Central.



the kingdom of God is within you.”<sup>19</sup> This passage emphasizes God’s desire to take up residence within us, to have intimacy and connection with his children and to then utilize those who do to advance the kingdom. According to Arndt’s theological perspective there are three stages within Christianity: purification, enlightenment, and the union of the soul with God.<sup>20</sup> Arndt had a high view and placed high value on the process and beauty found in sanctification. He genuinely believed that reform would happen in the church when it happened at the individual level and that the way it would occur would be through personal piety.<sup>21</sup> Arndt died in 1621, but his legacy and the pietist seeds he planted had already taken root.

### *Philip Jacob Spener*

The seeds planted by Arndt began to blossom and grow through the life and ministry of the man who became Arndt’s torchbearer, Philip Jacob Spener. Born in 1635, Spener was a gifted and accomplished youth. He began college in Colmar at fifteen years old and studied philosophy, ancient languages, debating, and elocution.<sup>22</sup> After one year there, he transferred to the University of Strasbourg to continue his studies, adding the New Testament as a subject of interest, and eventually earning a Master of Philosophy at only eighteen years old.<sup>23</sup> Spener demonstrated an appreciation for

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<sup>19</sup> Lindberg, *The Pietist Theologians*, 30.

<sup>20</sup> Lindberg, *The Pietist Theologians*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 76.

<sup>22</sup> Marie E. Richard, *Philip Jacob Spener and His Work* (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), 9, <http://archive.org/details/philipjacobspe01rich>.

<sup>23</sup> Richard, *Spener and His Work*, 9.

education, intellectualism, and history throughout his life, contradicting the claims of detractors who accused Pietism of being anti-intellectual or neglectful of doctrine and history. Spener developed an interest in theology shortly after earning his master's degree and began formal theological studies. He spent the next ten years oscillating between ministry and scholarship—pastoring, evangelizing, and eventually earning his Doctor of Theology in 1664.<sup>24</sup>

In 1666, Spener was chosen to be the superintendent of the clergy at Frankfurt am Main, a prominent church in the capital city of Germany, and served in that capacity for twenty years.<sup>25</sup> This appointment afforded Spener the opportunity to push for church renewal and have an active role in mentoring church leaders from his pietistic perspective on spiritual formation and education. During his time there he published his signature work, *Pia Desideria*, which means “pious desires” in Latin, an extremely popular book among protestants at the time which proved to be what launched the German pietist movement.<sup>26</sup>

As an educator and theologian, Spener had the tendency to preach from the whole of scripture, often cross-referencing scriptures from both testaments and multiple biblical literary genres in sermons.<sup>27</sup> Spener realized early on in his pastoral journey that his parishioners struggled to understand preaching and he attributed this to a lack of exposure and understanding of the “whole scripture.”<sup>28</sup> Selective or topical teaching and preaching,

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<sup>24</sup> Richard, *Spener and His Work*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 77.

<sup>27</sup> Richard, *Spener and His Work*, 23-24.

<sup>28</sup> Richard, *Spener and His Work*, 24.

though not inherently wrong in any way, can be a barrier to believers obtaining a holistic and comprehensive view of scripture. Understanding the complete thread and story of God's interaction with humanity enables believers to appreciate the various stages, phases, conflicts, and resolutions within God's word. Not fully knowing the main character of any story limits how much one can relate to that character. Spiritual formation involves conforming to the image of Christ. It is hard to conform to Christ without the full counsel of scripture. This is where it is critical that churches equip and instill believers with tools necessary to engage in personal bible study. Personal bible study was not a customary practice of believers in Spener's context, and many families often did not own a bible of their own. Scripture tells us that the word of God edifies, equips, and sustains believers. Bible study is an essential spiritual discipline of the Christian faith that enables the Word of God to accomplish its purpose. Simply attending corporate worship service and bible study fails to support full spiritual maturity and formation as bible teachers and preachers can only expound upon a portion of scripture in a lifetime. Spener sought to ensure that believers within his sphere of influence did not remain scripturally insecure and committed himself to remedying this issue through his ministry.<sup>29</sup> We will discuss ways that he pursued this goal as this chapter continues.

In contrast to Arndt, Spener had a notable ecclesiological theology and placed a strong emphasis on the corporate nature of the Christian faith as opposed to the individual.<sup>30</sup> This is noted in a popular sermon he preached in 1687, from the text of

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<sup>29</sup> Richard, *Spener and His Work*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 90.

Matt. 22:1-14, where he emphasized that the church is not a building, but rather it is wherever Christians gather.<sup>31</sup>

Spener's primary work, *Pia Desideria*, reflects a deep commitment to educational ministry. This is especially seen in proposals for the reform of the church that he offered in its concluding section. Spener suggested that scripture should be more extensively used, that the priesthood of all believers should be diligently established and exercised, that the practice of the Christian faith should be emphasized, not just knowledge of it, and that theological education must aim to help ministers become the Godly men the church needs.<sup>32</sup> Spener insisted that the church focus on equipping believers and supporting their spiritual formation toward an active, mature, and practical faith. He endeavored to accomplish this through his teaching ministry and placed great emphasis on the teaching ministries of all local congregations.<sup>33</sup> Heinemann shares,

Three major emphases made up Spener's ministry in Frankfurt during the years before he published his *Pia Desideria*. They were . . . (1) Biblical preaching aimed at a personal appropriation of the Christian life on the part of each one of his hearers; (2) a new stress on catechization as a means of bringing children and adults to a more responsible understanding of their faith; (3) the colleges of piety for mutual instruction and admonition among laymen under pastoral guidance.

Spener's colleges of piety, or *collegia pietatis*, began as small groups of adult parishioners led by Spener who met on Sunday afternoons to further discuss the sermon. However, due to their ever-increasing popularity, Spener shifted the meetings to Monday and Wednesday evenings. Attendees engaged in the process of exegesis of multiple

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<sup>31</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 90.

<sup>32</sup> Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 87-129.

<sup>33</sup> Mark H. Heinemann, "Philip Jakob Spener: Educational Ministry Innovator," *Christian Education Journal* 1, no. 3 (November 1, 2004): 111, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989130400100311>.

biblical texts, prayed, and read devotional literature that supported their spiritual formation and equipped them with tools to build their faith.<sup>34</sup>

Spener was an innovator that experienced both admiration and attacks throughout his life and ministry. His commitment to leveraging Christian education as a mechanism for advancing the Gospel was both evident and efficacious. Church leaders today, who in many ways are experiencing similar challenges to those he faced in the seventeenth century, can learn from his example.

### *August Hermann Francke*

A spiritual son of Spener, August Hermann Francke, was also a key figure within the Pietist Movement. During his lifetime he institutionalized Pietism with the development of a small school for poor children in the city of Halle that eventually evolved into an impressive multi-building complex of “pietistic social-educational” infrastructure purposed to impact the spiritual formation and education of Christian people.<sup>35</sup> The forty-building educational complex still stands today and currently functions as the Francke Foundation headquarters, an active school, museum, and culture center.<sup>36</sup> Francke was a theologian and an entrepreneur that was able to harness his public relations skills to increase the visibility and appreciation for pietist theology and educational approach throughout Europe and eventually the Americas. Though interested in theology at an early age, Francke wrote liberally about a period of significant doubt

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<sup>34</sup> Heinemann, *Educational Ministry Innovator*, 111.

<sup>35</sup> Lindberg, *The Pietist Theologians*, 100.

<sup>36</sup> Francke Foundations, “About Us,” Franckesche Stiftungen, accessed February 8, 2025, <https://www.francke-halle.de/en/about-us>.

and crisis in his faith. However, following what he described as an amazing conversion experience, Francke developed an unflappable confidence in the certainty of the bible, the truth of Christianity, and his calling to assist in reforming the church.<sup>37</sup> This resulted in Francke's theology being dominated by three themes: "biblicism, conversion, and individual and social reform."<sup>38</sup> This is evidenced by the scope of both his ministry and educational work. The school Francke established had a reverberating impact throughout protestant Europe even sending out dozens of missionaries to India in partnership with the Danish king who reigned from 1671 to 1730.<sup>39</sup>

Francke, most known for his pedagogical influence in the educational sector of Europe, through his own learning experience while studying the Hebrew language, developed an appreciation for a skill-based educational approach.<sup>40</sup> Francke began his Hebrew language study with a traditional knowledge-based approach, studying Hebrew grammar and completing language analysis, but saw minimal progress.<sup>41</sup> He then decided to pursue private tutoring with a renowned Hebrew teacher who immediately instructed Francke to become thoroughly acquainted with the first four chapters of the book of Moses in Hebrew, to the point that he understood every single word but to not concern himself with the grammar.<sup>42</sup> The exercise seemed futile but Francke obeyed the

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<sup>37</sup> Lindberg, *The Pietist Theologians*, 103.

<sup>38</sup> Peter James Yoder, *Pietism and the Sacraments: The Life and Theology of August Hermann Francke* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020), 36, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/2/monograph/book/82685>.

<sup>39</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 287.

<sup>40</sup> Marie E. Richard, *Augustus Hermann Francke and His Work* (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), 95, <http://archive.org/details/philipjacobspe01rich>.

<sup>41</sup> Richard, *Francke and His Work*, 95.

<sup>42</sup> Richard, *Francke and His Work*, 95.

instruction, and read through the Hebrew bible seven times in one year, becoming more acquainted with the language each time.<sup>43</sup> Practicing the discipline of reading Hebrew and skill development proved more effective than simply gaining knowledge about Hebrew grammatical rules, syntax, idiomatic expressions and definitions. This experience shaped Francke's educational philosophy and approach and has had a formative impact on this project.

Francke's ministry base in Halle eventually grew to accommodate around 3000 people.<sup>44</sup> In its walls he provided social services to those in need, exhibiting and modeling an active and engaged Christian faith. One of his most renowned efforts was an orphanage he built for the least privileged children in the region that had four different school levels covering every age group from elementary through high school.<sup>45</sup> The schools engaged in eclecticism and spiritual technologies that drew students from across Germany.<sup>46</sup> The school also provided an opportunity for area theological students to be employed and trained as teachers to provide a Pietist education that had the goal of promoting spiritual formation in students and creating an atmosphere where they felt valued and seen.<sup>47</sup> This was accomplished best, according to Francke, when teachers are intellectually disciplined, pious, of good report, and regularly commit time to devotion

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<sup>43</sup> Richard, *Francke and His Work*, 95.

<sup>44</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 286.

<sup>45</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 286.

<sup>46</sup> Kelly J. Whitmer, "Eclecticism and the Technologies of Discernment in Pietist Pedagogy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 4 (October 2009): 545-67, ProQuest.

<sup>47</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 287.

with God.<sup>48</sup> The Halle influence continued beyond Francke's earthly life and influenced the ongoing missionary efforts across Europe. During the colonial period of the nineteenth century, the next generation Pietists had a strong focus to train and send out missionaries.<sup>49</sup>

### **Important Concepts**

Church renewal movements, or revivals, often have universal practices and concepts that support and undergird them. These concepts assist adherents and participants with communicating about the movement in a consistent and concise manner. The Pietist Movement was no exception. There were certain conceptual terms regularly utilized across the time and significant space that Pietism reached, which included multiple continents across multiple centuries. These terms provide historical relevance to the theological foundations of the project that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Spener strongly held to and agreed with the orthodox doctrine of justification by faith alone, however, he preached frequently and wrote extensively on the concept of rebirth.<sup>50</sup> It was in fact an essential element of his theology as he posited that after justification and baptism, many in the church fall into a stagnant state, reject the new covenantal life provided through salvation, and fail to access the rebirth available to all believers through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>51</sup> According to Spener, rebirth was the final

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<sup>48</sup> F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, Studies in the History of Religion (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1973), 29-30.

<sup>49</sup> Collins Winn et al, *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 295.

<sup>50</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 92.

<sup>51</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 93.



stage of three stages in the life of a believer: the “kindling of the faith, justification and adoption as children of God, and the completion of the new man.”<sup>52</sup> One can assume that those who esteemed pietism believed that it was through rebirth that one could experience the completion of the new man.

Another central theological and biblical concept widely referenced within the Pietist Movement would be that of the universal priesthood. Pietists emphasized the biblical truth that we are all members of a royal priesthood where Jesus is our High Priest as discussed in 1 Pet. 2:9. It was this theological underpinning that pietists used to amplify and justify the use of the small groups or classes within the church, called *collegia pietatis*, as the mechanism by which the church equalized the value and supported the spiritual formation of both ministers and lay members, men and women.<sup>53</sup>

Pietists valued living life in a way that pleased God rather than self or fellow man. Love, dependence, and devotion to God was how they defined true Christianity. As a result, the theological concept of “resignation” resonated with multiple original pontificators of Pietism, including Arndt and Spener.<sup>54</sup> The state of resignation is complete and total surrender to God’s will and denial of our own. Leaning on Gal. 5:24 and Rom. 8:13, Spener asserted that in resignation “belongs the crucifying of the flesh...and the denial of the desire for one’s own honor, value, pleasure, and freedom to which we are naturally inclined.”<sup>55</sup> He challenged believers to conform to Christ by doing

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<sup>52</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 93.

<sup>53</sup> Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 95.

<sup>54</sup> Peter C. Erb, *Pietists: Selected Writings* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1983), 83.

<sup>55</sup> Erb, *Pietists: Selected Writings*, 84.

as he did in the garden of Gethsemane and regularly pray that God's will be done in our lives (Luke 22:42). Looking at this concept through the lens of the project, spiritual formation is a pre-requisite for resignation. Believers with minimal spiritual formation, who have yet to establish intimacy with Christ, would be incapable of truly resigning to God. This is because resignation, like spiritual formation, requires yielding and partnering with the Holy Spirit "so that he may work in and through them what is pleasing to him."<sup>56</sup> Resignation is the work and mandate of all believers, not just the elect. However, it is a state that reflects a heart that longs for God more than anything. Resignation is a by-product of spiritual formation. As we mature in our walk with Christ, we begin to crave intimacy with him like David did when he wrote the well-known scripture, "as a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God" (Ps. 42:1). Effectively engaging in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, and solitude enables that intimacy and spiritual formation.

### **Influence and Impact**

As mentioned earlier, the Pietist movement had its proponents and its detractors alike. The unfair criticism goes back all the way to critics of Spener's book, *Pia Desideria*, in 1675.<sup>57</sup> The same year that Spener was appointed superintendent of the clergy in Frankfurt, the theological faculty of Wittenberg University published a particularly scathing rebuke of Spener documenting what they deemed as 264 doctrinal

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<sup>56</sup> Erb, *Pietists: Selected Writings*, 85.

<sup>57</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 4.

errors of Spener and his followers.<sup>58</sup> However, when people define movements by their actual origins rather than by off-shoots or derivations, a clearer and more accurate understanding of a movement emerges.<sup>59</sup> For example, for those who criticized Pietism for being overly spiritual and experiential would benefit from learning about the mission work that was central to Pietism and Pietist leaders.

Pietism also influenced the modern church and had a role in shaping the world we live in today, including the American church. In 2009, Bethel University in Minnesota hosted a conference that focused solely on Pietism and the Pietist influence on Christianity.<sup>60</sup> It brought together the world's foremost thought-leaders on Pietism across various denominations and provided the means and opportunity for those scholars to produce a book cited frequently throughout this chapter titled *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*. One of the contributors, Peter Goodwin Heltzel, made a compelling argument that there was a pietist impulse in the theology of one of America's most prominent religious leaders in its history, the great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>61</sup> He posited that Dr. King's theology, a prophetic Baptist theology, grew out of an evangelical and pietistic Christian tradition that Christian African slaves in America leaned on, often to the dismay of slaveholders.<sup>62</sup> This was facilitated by the scores of Pietist missionaries who immigrated to the Americas, specifically, the Caribbean and southern North America, and brought with them their egalitarian ideas where the Gospel applied equally

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<sup>58</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, xix.

<sup>61</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 270.

<sup>62</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 270.

to all believers and women and Africans would lead the church.<sup>63</sup> African slaves in North America miraculously sought to make sense of their lives in light of the true meaning of biblical texts, protestant hymns, and often times quiet and inward devotion, all of which are strong pietist principles.<sup>64</sup> King frequently cited the idea of the “ecclesiolae in ecclesia” or the “church within the church” as the source of his hope that the true church would rise up and view racism for the social sin that it was.<sup>65</sup> Pietist pontificators also strongly espoused this idea. Dr. King’s dream and his willingness to be used by God in the United States undeniably demonstrates the influence of Pietism on Black American Christianity generally, and also on Dr. King himself.<sup>66</sup>

The Pietist Movement also influenced modern Christian education more generally. Pietists, through their theology and practice argued that Christian spiritual maturity is most effectively done within community.<sup>67</sup> The connection, collaboration, and camaraderie that close community or small groups brings to the spiritual formation process was valued in Pietist circles and foundational to their educational approach. Francke’s work in Halle also influenced a variety of educational institutions including Johns Hopkins University, the modern Sunday school model, early Methodism, and the development of the parish elementary school system.<sup>68</sup> The impact that Pietism had on

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<sup>63</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 271.

<sup>64</sup> Cornell West, *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 15.

<sup>65</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 270.

<sup>66</sup> Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, 276-279.

<sup>67</sup> Gehrz, *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education*, 52.

<sup>68</sup> Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 180.

both the historical and the modern church and educational sector is undeniable. It is why the movement represents a strong historical foundation upon which to build an informed doctoral project to engage the themes of spiritual formation and educational approach. As this chapter concludes, we will discuss the key imprints of the Pietist Movement and how they informed the development of the project.

### **Conclusion**

The Pietist Movement began as a reaction to the political and polemical climate of the Lutheran Church during the Protestant Scholasticism era. Pietists grew frustrated with the lack of emphasis on relationship and intimacy with Christ within the church and decided to draw attention to their discontent. Any study of human behavior reveals the tendency for humans, especially those in a position of authority, to respond to criticism of their behavior by undermining the credibility of those criticizing them. Pietists endured a significant amount of this type of engagement and treatment over the course of time, but as shown throughout this chapter, they still experienced success with influencing the church in Germany and across the world.

There are many ways that the Pietist movement and its original pontificators impacted the development of the doctoral project. Firstly, with the decision to test the effectiveness of skill-based education, the project incorporated aspects present in the ideal Pietist classroom including teachers and students valuing their responsibility to give and receive constructive feedback, support a healthy learning environment, and honoring God in every meeting.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, the project implemented components of Francke's

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<sup>69</sup> Gehrz, *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education*, 60.

educational approach including a relatively small class size of less than twenty-two students and using manual training as well as scientific principles as a means of education.<sup>70</sup> Finally, Philip Spener expressed in a pamphlet he wrote titled *The Spiritual Priesthood Briefly Described by God's Word*, that “the spiritual priesthood with which all Christians are endowed, consists in the threefold office of sacrifice, prayer, and the use of God's Word.”<sup>71</sup> These three elements were selected to be among the spiritual disciplines highlighted during the six-week class component of the project.

Ultimately, the Pietist Movement was a dynamic and influential renewal movement that lasted for centuries but continues to impact the church even today. Its origins, pontificators, key concepts, and practices are relevant and relatable to any church seeking growth or revival. Given the emphasis that Pietists placed on effective means of supporting the spiritual formation of congregants in a local church setting, which was outlined in significant detail throughout this chapter, the historical foundation that the movement provides for this project is clear and well-established.

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<sup>70</sup> Robert Ulich, *A History of Religious Education* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1968), 183, [http://archive.org/details/isbn\\_9780814704202](http://archive.org/details/isbn_9780814704202).

<sup>71</sup> Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 176.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter— Theological Foundations—provides an in-depth exploration of spiritual formation, the theological theme defined as “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God and for the sake of others.”<sup>1</sup> The chapter will define key theological concepts and explicate foundational doctrines that undergird the theological theme of spiritual formation. The theological foundation provides a sizable portion of the content and design for the doctoral project.

Conforming to the image of Christ is the ultimate goal of every believer in Christ, and is therefore, crucial to the life and activity of the church. Spiritual formation represents the mechanism for how Jesus cares for those that are “weary and carrying heavy burdens.”<sup>2</sup> As stated in chapter two, allowing Jesus to put a yoke on us is the act of yielding and conforming to him—the goal of spiritual formation. In Matthew 11, Jesus tells us not only to take his yoke upon ourselves but to also “learn of him” (Matt. 11:29a). These words describe intimacy, dependency, and trust. Through the ongoing process of spiritual formation, believers grow in likeness to Christ and gradually come to reflect him

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<sup>1</sup> Marykate Morse, “Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Formation: Which Is What?,” Missio Alliance, April 4, 2018, <https://www.missioalliance.org/evangelism-discipleship-and-spiritual-formation-which-is-what/>.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 11:28, *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). Hereafter, all scripture references NRSV unless stated otherwise.

in their lives more. The Apostle Paul describes this process when he writes “and all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Spiritual formation is biblical, a gracious gift from God, and a process that requires human effort working in partnership with the Holy Spirit to be accomplished. This delicate partnership has been the subject of theological debate.<sup>3</sup> However, “beginning with the dust of the ground in Genesis 2:7 and ending with a new heaven and earth in Revelation 21:1-5, the Bible is an intricate story of God’s formational work.”<sup>4</sup> The importance of spiritual formation in the work of the local church is the impetus of this project. Churches, some more than others, put significant resources into their Christian education ministries, which serve as reliable vehicles for facilitating spiritual formation in local congregations. However, there continues to be a surprising lack of spiritual maturity in American Christians. A study assessing how congregants perceive their own level of spiritual maturity found that “88% of believers have not advanced past the Toddler stage, which is two steps up from the Newborn stage.”<sup>5</sup> Bill White, the author of that study, describes the first three stages of spiritual maturity—newborn to toddler—

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<sup>3</sup> Ken Van Vliet, “Is Spiritual Formation Biblical?,” Missio Alliance, May 10, 2023, <https://www.missioalliance.org/is-spiritual-formation-biblical/>.

<sup>4</sup> Vliet, “Is Spiritual Formation Biblical?”

<sup>5</sup> Church Executive, “New Study Finds Nearly 50% of American Christians Have Not Progressed Past the ‘Infant’ Stage of Spiritual Growth,” *Church Executive* (blog), July 15, 2022, <https://churchexecutive.com/archives/new-study-finds-nearly-50-of-american-christians-have-not-progressed-past-the-infant-stage-of-spiritual-growth>.



as the “feed me” stage.<sup>6</sup> During these early stages, believers are born again (newborn), receive regular nourishing care from their heavenly father and spiritual parents (infant), and begin to learn how to walk by faith and communicate their needs to God (toddler).<sup>7</sup> The main reason the study participants gave for not maturing beyond the toddler stage was not engaging in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, bible reading, or worship.<sup>8</sup>

### Perceived Level of Spiritual Maturity

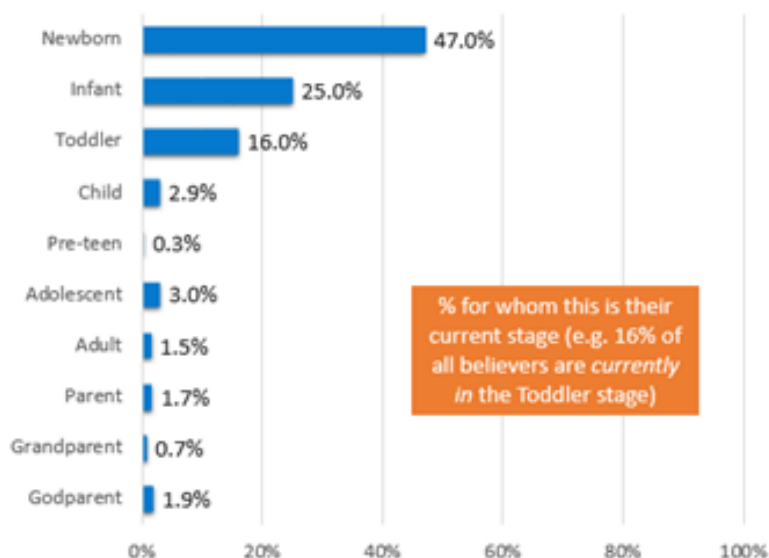


Figure 1. Chart showing the stage of spiritual maturity reported by study participants. Source: Church Executive, “New Study Finds Nearly 50% of American Christians Have Not Progressed Past the ‘Infant’ Stage of Spiritual Growth,” *Church Executive*, July 15, 2022, <https://churchexecutive.com/archives/new-study-finds-nearly-50-of-american-christians-have-not-progressed-past-the-infant-stage-of-spiritual-growth>.

The church, including this project’s context, must increase their effectiveness in facilitating the spiritual formation of congregants. The issue is that the church has

<sup>6</sup> Bill White, *Mature-ish: Your Mission from God Should You Choose to Accept It* (Friendswood, TX: Baxter Press, 2021), 64. Kindle.

<sup>7</sup> White, *Mature-ish*, 64.

<sup>8</sup> Church Executive, “New Study”.

primarily relied on the traditional knowledge-based learning approach to facilitate Christian education regarding concepts essential to spiritual formation. The hypothesis of this research is if congregants participate in a skill-based educational training on key spiritual disciplines, then they will be equipped with methodologies to implement those disciplines.

Examining spiritual formation as a theological theme was an essential research component given that promoting spiritual formation is the desired outcome of the project. This chapter outlines the results of that examination. It begins with a section discussing theological concepts that undergird spiritual formation including *imago Dei*, the Trinity, and Christology. The chapter then discusses spiritual disciplines and the role they have in the spiritual formation process. The chapter continues by identifying and exploring five key spiritual disciplines that will be highlighted in the project intervention. Finally, this chapter concludes by discussing how the theological elements of spiritual formation were crucial in the ideation, development, and implementation of the doctoral project.

### **Imago Dei and Spiritual Formation**

Scripture makes it clear that humanity is incapable, under our own power, of fulfilling God's purposes for his creation, but that through spiritual formation God works graciously in our lives to bring us to a place of wholeness in the center of his will.<sup>9</sup> God's purpose for his creation is succinctly expressed in Gen. 1:26 where God says that humankind is created in the *imago Dei*. Exploring the significance of this foundational theological idea regarding spiritual formation is essential for the ministry project that is

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<sup>9</sup> Mulholland and Barton, *Invitation to a Journey*, 19.

the focus of this research. The phrase *imago Dei* is a Latin phrase meaning “image of God.” Not a single other thing or being within creation was given such a distinction by the Creator.

A review of the literature regarding the *imago Dei* reveals that there are various interpretations of the phrase and just as many theories about why and how humans are *imago Dei*. Peterson asserts that interpretations generally fall into a few categories: royal-functional, Christological, historical, canonical, trinitarian, and relational.<sup>10</sup> He argues that interpreting *imago Dei* through any of those lenses individually results in an incomplete and erroneous understanding of what God intended when he made the declaration about humankind.<sup>11</sup> Peterson argues first that identity, not substance, function, or relationship, is the thrust of Gen. 1:26-28.<sup>12</sup> Second, he argues that interpreting *imago Dei* as identity resolves theological concerns regarding “the permanent ontological reality of the image and its relation to the biblical indication that the image undergoes progressive development and transformation.”<sup>13</sup> Third, he establishes the coherence of relevant scriptures across the biblical canon as it relates to the identity interpretation.<sup>14</sup> Fourth and finally, he shows that the identity interpretation accommodates important insights from the church fathers within the Christian tradition.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ryan S. Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 5-14, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>11</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 20.

Explaining why God gave humanity the identity “image of God,” Peterson shares,

God, in giving humanity the identity ‘image of God,’ leaves humanity without a self-directed definition or goal. Humanity is intended to move toward God. Humans can only know themselves truly in light of God as God is for the world. To use a different idiom, one could even say that God disciplines humanity through God's Being-for-the-world to the end that humanity will image God in its being-in-the-world.<sup>16</sup>

Peterson provides a theological interpretation of the core biblical text outlining creation and proves that spiritual formation, or movement toward God, is what we are intended to do as human beings.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of sin through the actions of Adam and Eve meant that *imago Dei* instilled at creation was marred (Gen. 3:6). Spiritual formation is the process that moves us back to our original positioning in God. *Imago Dei* is not a destination. Rather, it is the ongoing journey in which we come to realize our identity that comes from becoming a new creation in Christ, renewing our knowledge of God, patterning ourselves after God’s character, and taking up the mantle of becoming what we are intended to be by the Spirit of God.<sup>18</sup> We take up the mantle of “becoming” when we undergo true Christian spiritual formation.

But how do we theologically reconcile the fact that we are to be *imago Dei*, which is the image of God, *and* conformed to the image of Christ? Though different, they are not discrepant. Jesus is the personification of THE image of God.<sup>19</sup> Scripture confirms

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<sup>16</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 78.

<sup>17</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 78.

<sup>18</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 122.

<sup>19</sup> Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 36, ProQuest Ebook Central. “The” is capitalized on purpose emphasizing that Jesus is the image of God, and we are to conform to that.

this in multiple texts throughout the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, while discussing the challenge of evangelism, Paul authoritatively declares that “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). This verse clearly conveys that Christ, as the incarnation of God, is the image of God.<sup>20</sup>

Peterson asserts that the doctrine of the Trinity further explains that “the image of God is Trinitarian in virtue of its being fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As the children of God are formed by the Spirit into the likeness of Christ, they are for that reason formed in the likeness of God.”<sup>21</sup>

Spiritual formation involves each person in the Godhead. Understanding how we are to relate with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is an essential element of spiritual maturity. Churches that equally engage each person in the Godhead in their corporate sermons, bible studies, and other events, develop more well-rounded and healthier disciples.

### **The Trinity and Spiritual Formation**

As Christology developed throughout the early church, the church fathers, attempting to articulate the truth more clearly about the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, came to understand that God is one substance and three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit—Or as Tertullian described it, Trinity.<sup>22</sup> Spiritual formation reflects how individuals, and humanity collectively, interact with the triune God.

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<sup>20</sup> Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, 36.

<sup>21</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 116.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (London, UK: Sheed & Ward, 1947), 91.

Renowned theologian, Dallas Willard, speaks to the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in the process of spiritual formation asserting that

the theology of spiritual transformation emerges from the Trinitarian nature of God—relational, loving, gracious, mutually submissive, and unified in will.

This is the cornerstone statement. Everything that follows regarding spiritual formation flows from who God is. The God who is revealed in Scripture and who lived among us in Jesus Christ exists as a loving community of grace in three persons. From eternity past to eternity future, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to each other with grace, love, mutual submission, and unity of heart and by honoring their roles practicing functional submission—the Holy Spirit to the Son and the Father, and the Son to the Father. Marvelously, this triune God has invited us, in relationship with Himself, to participate in this culture of grace.<sup>23</sup>

Spiritual formation is an ongoing relationship with God, sustained by love, abounding in grace, supported with submission, and unified according to God's will.<sup>24</sup> As imitators of Christ, we are called to “model the others-centeredness, intimacy, trust, honest communication, and unconditional love that He exhibited in relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit as a member of the social Trinity.”<sup>25</sup> It is not driven by a desire for personal gain, privilege, or power. Christian spiritual formation is motivated by a heart that yearns for and depends on God. It reflects the nature of the Godhead and was established by the Creator himself.

When examining the theological theme of spiritual formation through a trinitarian lens, the person of Christ within the Godhead sets the pattern and is our pursuit in our journey of spiritual transformation. Spiritual formation can “move us toward wholeness

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<sup>23</sup> Dallas Willard et al., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2010), 159, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>24</sup> Willard, *The Kingdom Life*, 159.

<sup>25</sup> Willard, *The Kingdom Life*, 167.

in Christ or toward an increasingly dehumanized and destructive mode of being.”<sup>26</sup> The existence of that dichotomy within the process is important to raise. Spiritual formation occurs in every person given our tripartite nature, where we are all souls with a spirit inside of a body.<sup>27</sup> Both the atheist and the altar server enjoy, or at the very least, endure the formative process of their humanity throughout their lives starting at birth. Christian spiritual formation, however, compels believers to become more like Christ in word, deed, and nature. Ephesians 4 outlines this truth in verses fourteen and fifteen. Paul begins the chapter begging believers to “lead a life worthy of [their] calling” (Eph. 4:1). According to Paul,

we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church (Eph. 4:14-15).

In those verses Paul describes the process and *telos* of spiritual maturity and growth. As alluded to within the verses, the church has a particular role in facilitating, steering, and supporting the spiritual formation of congregants. It is the church, the bride and body of Christ, who must be found without a spot or wrinkle upon Christ’s return (Eph. 5:27). Thus, the local church must be more effective in creating an environment that ignites, supports, and sustains spiritual formation within its members.<sup>28</sup> It is essential that church

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<sup>26</sup> Mulholland and Barton, *Invitation to a Journey*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> John B. Heard, *The Tripartite Nature of Man, Spirit, Soul, and Body: Applied to Illustrate and Explain the Doctrines of Original Sin, the New Birth, the Disembodied State, and the Spiritual Body* (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1875), 161.

<sup>28</sup> Marykate Morse, “Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Formation: Which Is What?,” Missio Alliance, April 4, 2018, <https://www.missioalliance.org/evangelism-discipleship-and-spiritual-formation-which-is-what/>.

leaders facilitate an increased understanding and awareness of Christ's role in the process of spiritual formation in their congregations to help their congregants mature in their faith.

### **Christology and Spiritual Formation**

Christians who desire to become more like Christ would be well-served and empowered by increased knowledge of what Christ taught and how Christ lived. Jesus, being fully human and fully divine, had a human spirit and thus experienced spiritual formation himself.<sup>29</sup> Wilhoit shares that “when [Christians] consider Jesus’s spiritual life and development, they easily imagine that his spiritual life must have been largely baked in at birth and rather static.”<sup>30</sup> However, this could not be further from the truth. Though Jesus was sinless and enjoyed an intimate relationship with the Father, scripture reveals that his spiritual life was not complete at conception.<sup>31</sup> The New Testament details that “he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8) and that as an adolescent he “increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor” (Luke 2:52). Jesus, who again, was fully human and fully divine, “made himself nothing” (Phil. 2:7, NIV), was born as a human infant, and refrained from using his divinity while on earth. Then, by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in his life, he experienced spiritual formation and developed into an adult human being prepared to fulfill his purpose as the

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<sup>29</sup> James C. Wilhoit and Dallas Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 18, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>30</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 18.



savior of the world.<sup>32</sup> We must follow the pattern of spiritual formation that he himself demonstrated—respond to the call of God on our lives, and develop an obedient faith that draws us into a life of “radical union and participation in the life of Christ, a union made possible through the ministry of the Spirit.”<sup>33</sup>

Further examination of spiritual formation through the lens of Christology reveals that Jesus’s growth and formation were facilitated by consistent, concrete, and tangible acts of devotion.<sup>34</sup> Wilhoit expounds on this arguing that

the devotional acts of Jesus were rich and diverse, consisting of private acts (solitude, prayer retreats), small group practices (pilgrimage, fellowship, teaching, sacraments, worship), and large group meetings (teaching, synagogue worship, healing). He did not merely keep an abstract communion with God. Instead, he carried out his communion through tangible acts of piety and intimacy, which included constantly listening to and speaking to the Father.<sup>35</sup>

Theological insight abounds in the quote above. Most notably, effective spiritual formation is grounded in the development of a relationship with God that is diverse, practical, and marked by well-developed and consistent patterns of interaction.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the bible, there are numerous narrative accounts of individuals with similar patterns of divine interaction leading to the fulfillment of their role in God’s story.

There are parallels between Jesus’s spiritual development and the biblical narrative of Samuel, which was examined in-depth in chapter two. Samuel’s story illustrates God’s sovereignty, the presence of spiritual disciplines, and the role of

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<sup>32</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *Called to Be Saints: An Invitation to Christian Maturity* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 48, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 41.

<sup>36</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 41.

institutional spiritual leadership (Eli) in the process of spiritual formation.<sup>37</sup> Samuel, given to God for service at an early age, thrived in an environment that was not conducive to growth. Scripture summarizes his spiritual development: “Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people” (1 Sam. 2:26). The same language was used by the Apostle Luke in the verse discussed earlier in this chapter to describe the spiritual formation of Jesus.

Spiritual formation grounded in a deep understanding of the nature and work of Jesus Christ is the only true type of spiritual formation. It provides a foundation for the essential work of the Spirit-driven process where the inner-self undergoes transformation that results in the outer-self becoming an expression of and conformity to the character and teachings of Jesus.<sup>38</sup>

### **Spiritual Disciplines and Spiritual Formation**

The character and teachings of Jesus were demonstrated to us in the ways that he lived, his habits, and his disciplines. The word *discipline* is often negatively perceived given its connection to the undesired consequences of our actions. However, the word “*discipline*” comes from *discipulus*, which is Latin for “*pupil*.”<sup>39</sup> Disciplines are directly tied to training and education. Spiritual disciplines are indispensable parts of the process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the grace of God.

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<sup>37</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 42.

<sup>38</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2002), 18, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>39</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “Discipline,” accessed November 29, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discipline>.

However, it is important to note that spiritual disciplines are one biblical mechanism for supporting the spiritual formation process. Wilhoit emphasized that

we must never reduce [Christian spiritual formation] to teaching spiritual practices. Jesus did not mature only by what he practiced; he also was shaped by what he believed, by the friends he associated with, and by his ongoing conversation with the Father in partnership with the Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

Early prominent evangelicals like John Wesley even referred to the spiritual disciplines as a “means of grace.”<sup>41</sup> Wesley was making the claim that spiritual disciplines are not the “ends” (*telos*) of spiritual formation. The goal for the disciple of Christ is spiritual formation, not excellence in completing spiritual practices. The Pharisees were guilty of this exact practice and were regularly condemned for it by Jesus (Matt. 23:27; Mark 2:18; Luke 12:1). Wesley also affirmed the importance of yielding to the Holy Spirit’s guidance as one engages in this means of grace.<sup>42</sup> The Holy Spirit helps us to navigate spiritual experiences and impressions that we do not have the ability to understand or communicate. The hunger for intimacy that provokes one to engage in spiritual disciplines and the power that is stored in them are produced by the grace of God.<sup>43</sup> However, the process of shifting that hunger to actual practices, which will prove to be satisfying, such as fasting, prayer, or worship, creates value in the spiritual realm.

So, by divine design, spiritual disciplines are a means of practical grace “that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the

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<sup>40</sup> Wilhoit and Willard, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*, 49.

<sup>41</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler, Modern Critical ed., *Sermons I*, 1-33 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:381, WorldCat.

<sup>42</sup> Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 381.

<sup>43</sup> Donald S. Whitney and J. I. Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2014), 15, ProQuest Ebook Central.

habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that the people of God have practiced since biblical times.”<sup>44</sup>

Though practical and proper, many believers do not regularly engage in spiritual disciplines.<sup>45</sup> They see them as activities only pastors, preachers, and other ministry leaders are expected to do. The universal practical benefits and application of the disciplines are not well understood. Whitney describes this issue as “discipline without direction.”<sup>46</sup> However, scripture tells us otherwise. The spiritual disciplines give us direction by pointing us to Christ. According to Whitney and Packer,

the Bible says of God’s elect, ‘For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son’ (Romans 8:29). God’s eternal plan ensures that every Christian will ultimately conform to Christlikeness. We will be changed ‘when he appears’ so that ‘we shall be like him’ (1 John 3:2). If you are born again (see John 3:3-8), this is no vision; this is you, Christian, as soon as ‘he appears.’

So why talk about discipline? If God has predestined our conformity to Christlikeness, where does discipline fit in? Why not just coast into the promised Christlikeness and forget about discipline?

Although God will grant Christlikeness to us when Jesus returns, until then he intends for us to grow toward it. We aren’t merely to wait for holiness; we’re to pursue it. ‘Strive for peace with everyone,’ we’re commanded in Hebrews 12:14, ‘and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.’<sup>47</sup>

As discussed earlier, spiritual disciplines promote growth. Organisms that do not grow are dead or simply non-living organisms. Jesus said that he “came that [we] may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). When gifted individuals fail to practice discipline and rehearse their craft, they risk stagnation and the loss of effectiveness.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, as

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<sup>44</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Church Executive, “New Study.”

<sup>46</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 18-19.

believers, we are given certain spiritual gifts that must be developed through discipline, or we risk bearing little to no fruit.<sup>49</sup>

When discussing spiritual formation as it relates to the spiritual disciplines, it is important to explore the theological foundations of the disciplines themselves. The list of biblical spiritual disciplines is an exhaustive one. Even the number of spiritual disciplines that Jesus himself practiced as documented in the bible is substantive. Dallas Willard, a pioneer in the evangelical spiritual formation movement, groups his list of spiritual disciplines into two categories: disciplines of abstinence and disciplines of engagement.<sup>50</sup> Disciplines of abstinence include solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice; while disciplines of engagement include bible study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission.<sup>51</sup> Many theologians with expertise in spiritual formation have developed spiritual discipline frameworks and comprehensive lists.<sup>52</sup> No two lists are the same. However, there are key spiritual disciplines that are universally viewed as essential for the believer. For the purposes of this DMin project, a six-week curriculum will be developed to provide students with instruction on six key spiritual disciplines: silence, solitude, worship, bible intake, prayer, and fasting. Those disciplines will now be explicated in turn.

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<sup>49</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 18-19.

<sup>50</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 161, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>51</sup> Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 161.

<sup>52</sup> Some of these theologians include Dallas Willard, Donald J. Whitney, Richard J. Foster, and Adele Calhoun.

### *Silence and Solitude*

Though silence and solitude can be viewed as two separate spiritual disciplines, due to their mutuality and inter-connected nature, they are combined for the purposes of teaching and discussion. According to Whitney, “the discipline of silence is the voluntary and temporary abstention from speaking so that certain spiritual goals might be sought” while solitude is the “discipline of voluntarily and temporarily withdrawing to privacy for spiritual purposes.”<sup>53</sup>

In today’s noisy, constantly connected, and chronically distracted society, engaging in silence and solitude is counter cultural. It requires intention and discipline to do with any level of effectiveness or consistency. However, the disciplines of silence and solitude allow us to disconnect from the demands of our daily lives and spend time alone with Jesus.<sup>54</sup> When we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by silence, the discipline “offers a way of paying attention to the Spirit of God and what he brings to the surface of our souls. In quietness we often notice things we would rather not notice or feel.”<sup>55</sup> The vulnerability this brings creates an opportunity for us to then communicate those issues to God (1 Pet. 5:7).

Silence that is accompanied by solitude is formative because it provides the time and space required for the deep work of healing wounds from below the surface of our beings.<sup>56</sup> This can be seen in Jesus’s life when he began his earthly ministry by retreating

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<sup>53</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 168.

<sup>54</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 180-181, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>55</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 181.

<sup>56</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 191.

into the wilderness for a forty-day period of silence and solitude. When tempted by Satan to attain a kingdom for his own glory, he was able to choose and act according to his true identity as the Son of God.<sup>57</sup>

In solitude we can let go of the identity we put forward to the world, bring our whole selves to God, and be met with unconditional acceptance.<sup>58</sup> We are reminded of our *true* identity as *imago Dei*, an identity fulfilled by Christ and bestowed on us, not earned.

### *Bible Intake*

The bible is God-breathed, inerrant, and infallible. The word of God is the only place where God tells us about creation, our role within it, himself, his will, his ways, and about the life and purpose of his son, Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup> For this reason theologian Donald Whitney, asserts that “no spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God’s word.”<sup>60</sup> This spiritual discipline should occur through numerous mechanisms. These include hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, and applying God’s word.<sup>61</sup>

When we engage in the discipline of bible intake, it empowers us with knowledge, wisdom, and revelation needed to successfully navigate our lives. The word of God is the only offensive weapon in the armor of God outlined in Ephesians 6. Regular intake of God’s word equips us for targeted output of God’s word when we face

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<sup>57</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 191.

<sup>58</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 192.

<sup>59</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 24.

<sup>60</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 24-63.

challenges or approach opportunities. Jesus, who is our master teacher regarding the spiritual disciplines, exemplified the love of God's word, consistently using the phrase "as it is written" referring to scripture to answer questions, resist temptation, encourage others, and ultimately in preparation to face death on the cross.<sup>62</sup>

### *Prayer*

Prayer as a spiritual discipline serves many purposes. It is "an outlet, a connection, and a source of clarity all at the same time."<sup>63</sup> Through prayer, believers can connect their spirit to God's spirit. There is no other spiritual discipline that demonstrates the means of grace provided by spiritual disciplines quite as much as prayer. Leveraging prayer as a discipline allows believers to establish patterns for dialoging with God throughout the day.<sup>64</sup> This contrasts with the diminished benefits prayer provides when we only pray sporadically or occasionally.

Prayer is an expectation of all believers as outlined in Col. 4:2, where we are admonished to "devote [ourselves] to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving."<sup>65</sup> Though expected, effective prayer must also be learned.<sup>66</sup> Even the apostles ask Jesus to teach them how to pray (Matt. 6:9-13). As we engage in prayer consistently, intimacy

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<sup>62</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 281.

<sup>63</sup> Chaena Hollist, *The Value in Violation: Discover How to Heal Intentionally, Turn Your Pain into Purpose, and Find Beauty After Betrayal* (Powell, OH: Author Academy Elite, 2018), 41.

<sup>64</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 355.

<sup>65</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 68.

<sup>66</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 70.



with God grows, and as that happens our access to the spiritual realm increases, since God is a spirit. The results of an active prayer life are “life creating and life changing.”<sup>67</sup>

### *Fasting*

Fasting is referenced numerous times throughout the bible as a spiritual discipline in the narratives numerous biblical figures. Esther, Daniel, David, and Anna are among those figures (Esther 4:16-17; Dan. 10:3; 2 Sam. 12:15-23; Luke 2:36-38). Even Jesus fasted before beginning his earthly ministry, before healing people, and to overcome temptation.<sup>68</sup> Biblical fasting can be defined as abstaining from food for a designated period for a biblical purpose.<sup>69</sup> Like prayer, Jesus expects his followers to fast saying “And *when* you fast...But *when* you fast [emphasis added].”<sup>70</sup> His use of the word “when” in those statements signify that he had an assumption that believers would fast. However, the bible gives numerous warnings about fasting with the wrong motive or attitude. Calhoun discusses this issue bluntly stating, “when people do not live as God desires, they should be prepared for fasting to accomplish nothing (Isaiah 58:3-7). (2) Fasting is not for appearances. It does not make anyone pious or holy, and it does not earn points with God (Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:9-14).”<sup>71</sup> Fasting is a powerful discipline because it is a real and practical way to starve the flesh and feed the spirit. As the needs

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<sup>67</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, Special Anniversary ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 50, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>68</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 380.

<sup>69</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 146.

<sup>70</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 148.

<sup>71</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 380-381.

of the flesh are unmet, our spirit becomes more sensitive to the impressions, instruction, and guidance of God. Our spiritual eyes become clearer as they are impeded less by one of the most basic earthly desires—food. When fasting is done with a purpose that honors and brings glory to God, rather than us, we can obtain the reward outlined in the promise Jesus made about fasting. He told the disciples “when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:17-18).

Importantly, fasting is not a discipline meant to curry favor from God. Rather, it positions us to be led by the Spirit of God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

### *Worship*

Worship can only be conducted in the context of a relationship. Given that we were created as relational beings—our primary relationship being the one we have with our Creator—we were made to worship. Worship takes place in our decisions, our actions, our beliefs and the meaning we attach to them, our posture, our priorities, our creativity, our resources, and the list goes on. Worship is not simply participation in a church service on Sunday mornings.

The word “worship” is derived from the Saxon word *weorthscype*, which eventually became *worthship*.<sup>72</sup> So when we worship God, we are ascribing the proper worth to him.<sup>73</sup> God is worthy of worship. When we worship God, we yield our will and

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<sup>72</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 83.

<sup>73</sup> Whitney and Packer, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 84.

affirm his will. In worship, we open ourselves up to the one that has infinitely greater worth than that of our own fleshly desires. When we worship, we take a spiritual posture that is “receptive and responsive to the Holy Spirit’s movements and invitations.”<sup>74</sup> Worship is a discipline because it is something we must do that requires effort, sacrifice, and intentionality.

These six spiritual disciplines were evident in Jesus’s life as documented in scripture. It is critical that the church does as Jesus commanded in the Great Commission, which was to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you* [emphasis added]” (Matt. 18:19-20). This project endeavors to equip and empower congregants in the local context to obey Jesus’s command to consistently engage in spiritual disciplines to sustain and strengthen their spirits for God’s glory.

## Conclusion

This chapter explicated the theological theme of spiritual formation and its role in undergirding this research project. It began by providing the strong theological basis of the theme itself by exegeting Genesis 1:26 which outlines the creation of humankind. God declaring humans to be created in the *imago Dei* solidified that spiritual formation, which is the process of conforming to the image of Christ, is the principal purpose all humans are compelled to pursue.<sup>75</sup> Through spiritual formation, we embrace *imago Dei* because Christ has already fulfilled it.

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<sup>74</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 34.

<sup>75</sup> Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 78.

Theological support that the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology provides when contending for the biblicality, doctrinal soundness, and the practical significance of spiritual formation was then explored. Spiritual formation, though debated by many, is a universal aspect of the human experience. This research argued that the church's role in the spiritual formation of the individual is central to its purpose. This research also gave insight into the sense of urgency that spiritual formation requires. The opportunity before the church—which this project intends to address—is to discover ways to be more effective facilitators of Christian spiritual formation in our congregations and ministries.

This chapter ended with a detailed discussion concerning the role of spiritual disciplines in the process of spiritual formation. Numerous biblical examples where spiritual disciplines were engaged with and practiced were shared. Instances where Jesus practiced them or commanded his followers to do so further demonstrated their role in the spiritual formation process. The examination of Jesus's methodology, approach, and intent informs any believer who seeks to imitate Christ. These key insights will be used in developing the project intervention. Similarly consequential and beneficial to the discussion, misconceptions, misuses, and important considerations regarding the use of spiritual disciplines were expounded upon. Insight gained concerning theological issues regarding the use of spiritual disciplines will inform the project development, intervention, and implementation.

Developing an effective, evidence-based, and transformational skill-based educational program to teach about key spiritual disciplines, thus promoting spiritual formation in the congregants of Dayspring Family Church, is the expressed goal of this DMin project. The research conducted and documented in this chapter provided strong

theological foundations upon which to build the ministry model that will achieve this goal.

Dallas Willard, in his book *Renovation of the Heart*, asked a question that the expansive discussion on spiritual formation in this chapter begs:

If what we have said about the spiritual formation of the children of light is true, what would we expect to find in those gatherings of disciples of Jesus into local congregations, which we call “churches”? Of the actual churches around us, what would they do better to omit, and what do they need more of?

A reasonable response might be that these local congregations would be entirely devoted to the spiritual formation of those in attendance—to the “renovation of the heart,” as we have explained it here. This seems to have been Paul’s idea, and he, more than any other, was given the role of defining the church, this new thing on earth, the non-ethnic people of God. In it there was to be ‘no . . . Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all’ (Colossians 3:11). Identification with Christ and the emerging community of Christ obliterated all other identities, not by negation, but by its new and positive reality.<sup>76</sup>

Given the current spiritual, cultural, and political landscape, it is especially important that the church make disciples who are steadily conforming to the image of Christ. The ministry of spiritual formation can no longer be seen as merely one feature or one element of the church; it needs to be the main priority. Additionally, traditional educational approaches have been shown to have limited effectiveness due to the lack of life application and spiritual maturity amongst most believers. Therefore, these must be set aside or supplemented with transformational approaches that have proven to be more effective in promoting spiritual formation among congregants.

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<sup>76</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 203.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS**

Education is a central component of the human experience. We begin learning at the moment of birth when we spontaneously learn to use our lungs to breathe oxygen in our new and completely foreign environment outside of our mother's womb. Learning continues, to some degree, until the moment we transition out of this life.

Education is often thought to be what takes place in a primary, secondary, or post-secondary classroom, for the purposes of intellectual development. However, education is essential for every domain of our lives—physical, mental, emotional, social, vocational and spiritual. In previous chapters, it has been argued that in implementing spiritual education programs, the church has relied primarily on traditional knowledge-based educational approaches to facilitate Christian education concerning the essential concepts of spiritual formation, such as spiritual disciplines. Skill-based education has been hypothesized to be an alternative pedagogical approach that will equip congregants with methodologies to implement spiritual disciplines.

This chapter will bring together the disciplines of theology and education with a focus on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). ELT is a learning theory that purports that learning is “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of

experience.”<sup>1</sup> The theory asserts that humans learn by doing and being actively involved in the learning process.<sup>2</sup> ELT heavily informs and serves as a theoretical underpinning of the skill-based educational approach used in this project.

ELT was developed by David Kolb—a psychologist and education theorist—in 1984. He credits well-known theorists Kurt Lewin, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget as significant professional influences on his perspective on learning.<sup>3</sup> Kolb’s experiential learning cycle model is widely referenced as a tool for communicating the key principles of the theory.<sup>4</sup>

According to ELT, learning takes place in four modes split between two types of experiences: grasping experience, which includes the Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) modes and transforming experience, which involves the Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE) modes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2014), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Mary McCarthy, “Experiential Learning Theory: From Theory to Practice,” *Journal of Business & Economics Research* 8, no. 5 (May 2010): 136, ProQuest.

<sup>3</sup> McCarthy, “Experiential Learning Theory,” 131-32.

<sup>4</sup> On studies that reference the Experiential Learning Cycle see Mahmoud Abdulwahed and Zoltan K. Nagy, “Applying Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle for Laboratory Education,” *The Research Journal for Engineering Education* 98, no. 3 (July 2009): 283-94, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2009.tb01025.x>; Jung-Hoon Ahn, “Application of the Experiential Learning Cycle in Learning from a Business Simulation Game,” *E-Learning and Digital Media* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 2008): 142-236, <https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2008.5.2.146>; Devi Akella, “Learning Together: Kolb’s Experiential Theory and Its Application,” *Journal of Management & Organization* 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 100-12, <https://doi.org/10.5172/jmo.16.1.100>; Abdullah Konak, Tricia K. Clark, and Mahdi Nasereddin, “Using Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle to Improve Student Learning in Virtual Computer Laboratories,” *Computers & Education* 72 (March 1, 2014): 11-22, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2013.10.013>; Russ Vince, “Behind and Beyond Kolb’s Learning Cycle,” *Journal of Management Education* 22, no. 3 (June 1, 1998): 304-19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/105256299802200304>.

<sup>5</sup> David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2014), 47.

Learning occurs as the learner cycles through “experiencing (CE), reflecting (RO), thinking (AC), and acting (AE)” within a situated educational opportunity.<sup>6</sup> Mayombe explains that learning by doing, experiencing, and reflecting are core characteristics of skill development, thus demonstrating that ELT is a theoretical underpinning for skill-based education.<sup>7</sup> The emphasis that the skill-based educational approach and ELT place on doing, experiencing, and learners actively engaging in the learning process is opposite but complementary to the traditional knowledge-based approach. ELT concepts will be incorporated into the skill-based educational training that will be conducted during this DMin project, which will strengthen the efficacy and impact of the intervention.

As reflected in the overview above, the Experiential Learning Theory is compatible with spiritual formation and the related variables examined within this research project. For this reason, this chapter will engage “dialogue” as a scientific model, as outlined by Ian Barbour in *When Science Meets Religion*, to discuss how religion and science intersect throughout.<sup>8</sup>

The chapter will begin with a discussion on the ways in which ELT addresses the problem identified within my local context and gives interdisciplinary support for the project hypothesis. The chapter will then continue with a dialogue about how ELT intersects with the exegetical arguments and biblical foundation put forward in chapter

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<sup>6</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Celestin Mayombe, “Promoting Youths’ Skills Acquisition through Experiential Learning Theory in Vocational Education and Training in South Africa,” *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning* 14, no. 1 (August 3, 2023): 133, <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-10-2022-0216>.

<sup>8</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), 9-12, ProQuest Ebook Central.



two. A discussion on the similarities between ELT and the Pietist movement, discussed in-depth in chapter three, will follow. Finally, how the nature, components, and process of spiritual formation correlate with those same aspects of Experiential Learning Theory will be outlined and underscored. This chapter will provide substantial interdisciplinary support for the argument that educational approach has a significant role in determining the efficacy of promoting spiritual formation within a local congregational context.

### **Educational Approach Intersection**

#### *Knowledge-based Education (KBE)*

Academic institutions and religious institutions alike have heavily relied on KBE for the purpose of facilitating learning throughout history.<sup>9</sup> KBE emphasizes learning “through the transmission of information, often through readings and lectures.”<sup>10</sup> Students are expected to listen, extract the important components of the content, and comprehend its meaning. Academic settings then check for understanding in the form of formative and summative assessments. However, no such comprehension check occurs after most Wednesday evening bible study lectures or Sunday morning sermons. Though KBE has obvious limitations when it comes to its ability to induce internal personal transformation, it has a role in the learning process.<sup>11</sup> Information, which provides relevant facts and context regarding whatever topic is being discussed, is vital. However,

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<sup>9</sup> Jamir Williams, “Skills-Based Learning: Benefits and Strategies,” *Instructure* (blog), March 13, 2024, <https://www.instructure.com/resources/blog/skills-based-learning-benefits-and-strategies>.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, “Skills-Based Learning.”

<sup>11</sup> Williams, “Skills-Based Learning.”

just as vital to a wholistic understanding of the information itself is application, conceptualization, and experimentation with that information. When all those elements are included in the learning process, transformation is more likely to occur. Notably, spiritual transformation, the work of the Holy Spirit, is a necessary component of conformation into the image of Christ. Scripture conveys this clearly when Paul writes, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”<sup>12</sup> Rather than conforming to this world, we are to conform to the image of Christ, which as we discussed in chapter four, *is* the will of God and the expressed purpose for which we were created.

### *Skill-based Education (SBE)*

Skill-based education emphasizes “acquisition of knowledge through practice and application.”<sup>13</sup> Advocates of a skill-based educational approach assert that actively engaging with content, experiencing concepts, and learning by doing are essential components of the learning process, especially when the learning goal is that the information being shared be applied in the student’s lives.<sup>14</sup> Skill-based educators employ

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<sup>12</sup> Rom. 12:2, *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). Hereafter, all scripture references NRSV unless stated otherwise.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, “Skills-Based Learning.”

<sup>14</sup> For peer-reviewed articles discussing the efficacy of the skill-based educational approach in other industries see Nitza Davidovitch and Zvi Shiller, “Skill-Based Teaching for Undergraduate STEM Majors,” *American Journal of Engineering Education* 7, no. 1 (June 2016): 29-36, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1103430>; Mehmet Serdar Erciş and Yusuf Söylemez, *The Skill Approach in Education: From Theory to Practice* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018); Simbar Masoumeh et al., “Skills-Based Education for Promoting Healthy Diet Among Female Adolescents: A Randomized Controlled Trial Study,” *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal* 39, no. 1 (February 2022): 87-95, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-020-00696-y>;

a vast range of strategies in their learning environments including “project-based learning, experiential learning, flipped classrooms, collaborative group activities, and real-world applications of knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> They also provide coaching, mentoring, and individualized feedback to students to assist them in refining their skills while tailoring these interventions to each student’s individual strengths and weaknesses.<sup>16</sup>

Skill-based education intrinsically encourages ongoing growth and development. It does not assume that once you have learned about something, you have mastered it. Instead, learners are encouraged to “constantly refine and enhance their abilities through ongoing practice and feedback.”<sup>17</sup> In light of this, SBE naturally lends itself to a life-long journey of incorporating experiences, reflection, and practices within a community of support and accountability.

This concept, skill-based education, within the discipline of education has a counterpart in the religious concept of spiritual formation and provides support for the dialogue between the two. Interestingly, skill-based education has seen a rise in awareness, interest, and utilization in many sectors throughout society. This must include the church. Rathod asserts that a changing educational landscape has prompted this shift from knowledge-based learning to skill-based learning.<sup>18</sup> Educators can no longer simply disseminate information and challenge those listening to remember as much of the information as they can. Educators—academic, vocational, and religious alike— must be

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<sup>15</sup> Rathod, “Role of Teachers,” 89

<sup>16</sup> Rathod, “Role of Teachers,” 89.

<sup>17</sup> Rusconi, “What Is Skill-Based Learning & Why It’s Important in the Workplace.”

<sup>18</sup> Rathod, “Role of Teachers,” 89.

“facilitators, mentors, and guides” and assist in shaping an educational experience where learners are equipped with everything needed for practical success in their day-to-day lives.<sup>19</sup>

### *ELT Intersection*

Experiential Learning Theory addresses the research problem of this project directly as it is a theoretical underpinning of the independent variable—skill-based educational approach pedagogy. As previously stated, the research hypothesis is that if congregants participate in a skill-based educational training on key spiritual disciplines, then they will be equipped with methodologies to implement those disciplines. ELT is composed of the necessary constructs to counter a knowledge-based educational approach pedagogy, which is an impediment to efficacious spiritual formation ministry in congregational settings.

ELT, with its emphasis on learning by doing, knowledge application, and transformation by experience, intersects with skill-based pedagogical concepts including hands-on activities, skill practice, and personalized feedback. Incorporating theoretical constructs of ELT into the project intervention will assist in accurately evaluating the hypothesis while validating the results of the study.

### **Biblical Intersection**

The passage that serves as a biblical foundation for this project is 1 Sam. 3:1-10. In this passage, the author shares a portion of the historical narrative of Samuel, who was

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<sup>19</sup> Rathod, “Role of Teachers,” 89.

a boy serving the Lord at the temple under the guidance of the prophet, Eli. For the majority of the passage Samuel is described as lacking spiritual maturity since he “did not yet know the Lord” (1 Sam. 3:7). However, a learning encounter takes place throughout the ten verses, and within it we see his teacher, Eli, utilizes both the knowledge-based educational approach and the skill-based educational approach. A close examination of the encounter through the lens of Experiential Learning Theory reveals a dialogue between the educational theory and the biblical text, as all five key constructs of ELT identified in a systematic review of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle are evident in the passage.<sup>20</sup> That intersection will be expounded upon over the next few paragraphs.

Morris, identifying a need for clarity on precisely what constitutes a “concrete experience” and the nature of how a concrete experience should be treated according to ELT, conducted a systematic literature review on those topics.<sup>21</sup> Following the review, the first of five key constructs identified was that “learners are involved, active participants.”<sup>22</sup> They are not detached, passive receptacles for information. Samuel’s concrete learning experience met this criterion as Eli tasked him with an activity with clear instructions on how to initiate and complete the experience. In 1 Sam. 3:9 it states, “Eli said to Samuel, to ‘Go, lie down; and if [God] calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’ So, Samuel went and lay down in his place” (1 Sam. 3:9).

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Morris, “Experiential Learning – a Systematic Review and Revision of Kolb’s Model,” *Interactive Learning Environments* 28, no. 8 (November 16, 2020): 1064, <https://doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1570279>.

<sup>21</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

<sup>22</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

Samuel had an active role in the learning process laying the groundwork for a personally transformative experience.

The next key construct requires that “knowledge is situated in place and time.”<sup>23</sup>

In experiential learning, the concrete experience needs to have occurred at a particular moment in place and time that can be referenced by the learner. Samuel’s experience met this criterion. It took place as “Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was” during one night in the city of Shiloh as recorded in 1 Sam. 3:3. By connecting Samuel’s knowledge of God to his present circumstances rather than simply lecturing Samuel about what hearing from God is like in a theoretical sense, Eli changed the trajectory of Samuel’s spiritual formation. The practical strategies Eli provided to facilitate the learning experience also empowered Samuel to easily apply them.

The third key construct identified in the systematic review specifies that during concrete experiences “learners are exposed to novel experiences, which involves risk.”<sup>24</sup> In the biblical passage, Samuel heard a voice call him three times and had come to Eli to inquire only to be given little response and then turned away. Each of those three calls were uneventful. However, on the fourth call, Eli, shifting his approach and stepping into his role as a facilitator and guide, gave Samuel instructions for how to posture oneself to hear from God, a novel experience (1 Sam. 3:9). There was risk involved because there was no guarantee that God would call Samuel again, that this was indeed a supernatural visitation, or that the Holy Spirit was prepared to facilitate the process. However, in this instance, the concrete learning experience did bear fruit in the form of an audible

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<sup>23</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

<sup>24</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

visitation from the Lord (1 Sam. 3:10). Samuel made significant progress in his spiritual formation journey as a result of this marked experience. From that point on scripture conveys that “the Lord was with [Samuel] and let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Sam. 3:19). Of course, not all experiential learning opportunities will have comparable impact or significance to that of Samuel’s, however, the transformation of experience in the learning process has been both theorized and demonstrated in practice. Seeing the intersection biblically further supports the validity of the argument and this project’s hypothesis.

The fourth key construct of a concrete experience within ELT is that “learning demands inquiry to specific real-world problems.”<sup>25</sup> When incorporating experiential learning into the educational process, the issue, topic, or subject that is being addressed should have real-world implications. Experiential learning works best when the content being taught needs to be applied or implemented in the lives of students. The biblical encounter in the focal passage involved Samuel learning how to identify God’s voice and position himself to experience intimacy with the Lord. Samuel needed to learn how to communicate with God so that he could grow in his spiritual maturity and become an agent of change in the political history of Israel. Samuel’s concrete experience outlined in the passage meets the criterion for the fourth key construct.

The fifth and final key construct identified by Morris states that “critical reflection acts as a mediator of meaningful learning.”<sup>26</sup> Experiential learning requires an element of reflection on a particular experience that can then be incorporated into the learner’s

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<sup>25</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

<sup>26</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

conceptualization and understanding of the topic at hand. Without reflection, and a lack of concrete experience, there is no opportunity for new ideas to develop or new meaning to be able to attach to previous experiences. As a result, little or no transformation can take place. Following Samuel's concrete experience in which he received a rare prophesy about Israel's future, scripture outlines that the next morning "Eli called Samuel and said... 'What was it that he [God] told you?'" (1 Sam. 3:16). That question is a reflection prompting question. It created an opportunity for Samuel to conceptualize and narrate what he experienced and the meaning he attached to the experience. The reflection moment, given the nature of it, was the equivalent of speaking on God's behalf and was undoubtedly formative.

ELT and the biblical foundations of this project, as described in the dialogue scientific model, have clear conceptual overlap that allowed for significant reflection.<sup>27</sup> There were numerous ideological and practical intersections between the systematic literature review findings completed by Morris and the examination of the biblical text. While science may not be able to address the supernatural nature of the learning experience outlined in the biblical text, the science around the efficacy of skill-based education and specifically, the concrete experience constructs of the ELT, was confirmed.

### **Historical Intersection**

The Pietist Movement, which originated as most renewal movements do, as a protest or reaction to the status quo of their time, provides the historical foundation for the DMin project. As discussed in chapter three, the first Pietists were Lutherans who

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<sup>27</sup> Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 9-12.



were dissatisfied with the climate, condition, and perceived priorities of the church, which they felt was “doctrine-heavy and head-focused.”<sup>28</sup> Pietists sought to inspire Lutherans in Germany to shift to a more experiential faith by emphasizing simple and pure study of the bible, repentance, holy living, a deeply personal relationship with Christ, and love and sacrifice for others.<sup>29</sup> ‘Experiential’ is a word regularly used in historical and theological literature as a descriptor of the Pietist Movement.<sup>30</sup> Unsurprisingly then, the key principles, practices, and concepts of Pietism, the historical foundation of this project, intersect and overlap with key constructs of the Experiential Learning Theory.

Shantz, author of *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800*, asserts that there are four elements of the Pietists’ understanding of “true faith” and all four are compatible or complementary to the four modes within Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle or the five key constructs of ELT identified by Morris.<sup>31</sup> Though Shantz concisely listed them in his book, a review of the literature on Pietism reveals that the four elements he brings to

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<sup>28</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 72, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Gangel and Warren Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 172.

<sup>30</sup> For references in historical and theological literature describing Pietism as “experiential” see Christian T. Collins Winn et al., *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: James Clark, 2011), JSTOR, 6; Carter Lindberg, *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 78, ProQuest Ebook Central; Douglas Shantz, *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 228, ProQuest Ebook Central; Christopher Gehrz, *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 35-36.

<sup>31</sup> Shantz, *Companion to German Pietism*, 202.

the surface are generally agreed upon because they are referenced in *Pia Desideria*, the signature work of one of Pietism's original pontificators, Jacob Spener.<sup>32</sup>

According to Shantz, the first of four elements that undergird the Pietistic understanding of "true faith" is that "a 'true Christian' refers not simply to a person who goes to church, but to someone *who feels the work of God within him or herself* [emphasis added]. Personal faith, rather than affiliation with a denomination, is primary."<sup>33</sup> For Pietists, Christians are not passive spectators where their faith happens outside of them or to them. They are engaged in the development of their faith and God reciprocates by allowing them to feel his work within themselves. This element especially coincides with the Experiential Learning Theory construct that "learners are involved, active participants."<sup>34</sup> ELT requires learners to be engaged in the educational process and allow firsthand experiences to transform them.

The second element undergirding Pietistic devoutness is that "true faith refers not to a sound knowledge of church doctrines, but to a frame of mind. This is to be attained not by learning dogmas by heart, but rather through a personal encounter with God."<sup>35</sup> Pietists valued transformation over information. Knowledge of doctrine, law and tradition to the exclusion of a relationship with Christ and a renewed mind is precisely what Jesus warned the Pharisees about throughout the New Testament (Matt. 23:27; Mark 2:18; Luke 12:1). The Pietists' focus on frame of mind reinforces the Apostle Paul's charge to

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<sup>32</sup> Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 87-95.

<sup>33</sup> Shantz, *Companion to German Pietism*, 202.

<sup>34</sup> Morris, "Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review," 1064.

<sup>35</sup> Morris, "Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review," 1064.

believers mentioned earlier in this chapter that they “not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of [their] minds” (Rom. 12:2). This concept complements the “transforming experience” aspect of Kolb’s experiential learning model.<sup>36</sup> A transformed mind is a mind that is learning and growing. The second element goes on to assert that a transformed mind is attained “through a personal encounter with God.”<sup>37</sup> Transformation is not passive and theoretical, it is active and experiential. True faith is knowing God rather than simply knowing about God. The Apostle Paul explains the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us to know God:

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:9-11).

Intimacy, or knowing and being known, happens with God when believers engage in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, fasting, solitude, and intake of his word. These, as Wesley referred to them, are “means of grace” by which we can personally encounter God through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>38</sup> The word “experience” used by Kolb, is synonymous with the word “encounter” used by Morris. Here the two disciplines clearly demonstrate a dialogue and mutual conceptualization of the research concepts.

The third element undergirding the Pietist perspective on true faith conveys that it “must bring about visible change in one’s everyday life. The person who has experienced

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<sup>36</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

<sup>38</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler, Modern Critical ed., *Sermons I*, 1-33 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:396, WorldCat.

an inner, personal encounter with God *must also convert his commandments into action and lead a pious life* [emphasis added].”<sup>39</sup> Faith is an action and something we live out in our daily lives. Scripture conveys this truth in James 2:17, “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”<sup>40</sup> Pietists believed that true faith included consistent and deliberate practice of piety. The original pontificators of the Pietist movement emphasized the importance of one’s faith being applied and evident. Johann Arndt articulates his theology on sanctification:

Truly, the Lord did not understand such faith as is now discussed with the mouth but denied by deed. Men now love Christ with their tongues but not in deed and truth. Christ understood the whole newborn man, the tree with its fruits, renewed through faith, in which Christ lives and dwells through faith. Such faith he will find in few. Where true faith is, there Christ and his holy life are. Where one does not follow Christ in his life through faith, there is neither faith nor Christ, but that one is cast out and denied.<sup>41</sup>

Aligning with Arndt, fellow Pietist patriarch, Jacob Spener, explicitly stated in a list of proposed church reforms outlined in *Pia Desideria* that “practice of the Christian faith should be emphasized, not just knowledge.”<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, Experiential Learning Theory also emphasizes application and action, as opposed to lecturing or theorizing. Given this emphasis, “deliberate practice” is a frequently cited learning mechanism.<sup>43</sup> According to ELT, deliberate practice is viewed as “mindful experiencing with the addition of focused reflection” that reliably supports

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<sup>39</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

<sup>40</sup> James 2:17, *New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> Johann Arndt, *True Christianity* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 60.

<sup>42</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 95.

<sup>43</sup> Alice Kolb and David Kolb, *The Experiential Educator: Principles and Practices of Experiential Learning* (Kaunakakai, HI: Experience Based Learning Systems, 2017), 165.

learning and growth goals.<sup>44</sup> Alice and David Kolb even define deliberate practice as “a discipline requiring motivation fueled by deep interest and a long time frame commitment.”<sup>45</sup> While reflecting on that definition, the process of deliberately practicing spiritual disciplines throughout the course of one’s life fueled by love of God and a motivation to be conformed to the image of Christ comes to mind. Not to mention that mindfulness and focused reflection are essential for the spiritual discipline of biblical meditation for the purpose of renewing one’s mind and pursuing spiritual formation.<sup>46</sup>

The fourth element that distinguished early Pietists from the traditional German Lutheran Church of the time “were the ‘private meetings,’ also known as *collegia pietatis*, bible meetings, prayer meetings, meetings for mutual edification, meetings to discuss the sermon, or ‘revival meetings.’”<sup>47</sup> Pietist sought out experiential opportunities with their fellow believers in pursuit of transformation. During these meetings they were able to connect with close friends and neighbors for a “personal exchange of experiences.”<sup>48</sup>

*Collegia pietatis* meetings were experiential learning opportunities themselves, while also being a venue for participants to corporately reflect on experiences they may have had with the Lord individually during the week. Besides sharing testimony, participants also studied scripture and spent time discussing the interpretation of the text

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<sup>44</sup> Kolb and Kolb, *The Experiential Educator*, 165.

<sup>45</sup> Kolb and Kolb, *The Experiential Educator*, 165.

<sup>46</sup> Dallas Willard et al., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2010), 207, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>47</sup> Morris, “Experiential Learning—a Systematic Review,” 1064.

<sup>48</sup> Shantz, *Companion to German Pietism*, 202.

as well as how it could be applied in their daily lives.<sup>49</sup> Considering the event format and components, *collegia pietatis* meetings likely often met the criteria for concrete experiences and involved all four elements of Kolb’s learning cycle—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.<sup>50</sup>

The Pietist Movement, given its experiential, transformative, and practical nature, driven by a focus on the spiritual formation of the believer, spread across Europe and eventually reached Asia, the Americas, and other parts of the world. The historical movement has clear conceptual compatibility with Experiential Learning Theory and the examination of the intersection provides substantive interdisciplinary support for this project’s hypothesis.

### **Theological Intersection**

The theology of spiritual formation provides the theological foundation for this project. Spiritual formation can be defined as “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God and for the sake of others.”<sup>51</sup> Conformity requires a level of closeness and intimacy to that with which one is being conformed. This is why Jesus praised Mary who sat close to Jesus’ feet while he spoke, but corrected her sister, Martha, who was focused more on managing the event than she was on experiencing Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). As Jesus admonished Martha, he stated that “there is need of only

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<sup>49</sup> Mark H. Heinemann, “Philip Jakob Spener: Educational Ministry Innovator,” *Christian Education Journal* 1, no. 3 (November 1, 2004): 111, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989130400100311>.

<sup>50</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Morse, “Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Formation: Which Is What?”

one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). When discussing the "better part," Jesus is referring to Mary's exclusive focus on spending time with Jesus while he was there.<sup>52</sup> Spiritual formation emphasizes themes including intimacy, relationship, and application that lead to an experiential faith and results in transformation in the lives of believers. Experiential Learning Theory, which is being examined throughout this chapter, intersects with the key theological elements of spiritual formation.

The first notable intersection is that both spiritual formation and ELT emphasize imitation as a means of learning and growth. Spiritual formation involves imitating Christ, thus growing in Christlikeness. Christian education ministries, in fulfilling their purpose, teach that students should learn of God so they may imitate both his nature and his works.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, ELT emphasizes learning by doing, which in many classroom settings involve role-playing or simulation activities to provide concrete learning experiences for students to learn to apply new knowledge and skills.<sup>54</sup>

A second intersection between spiritual formation and ELT is the emphasis on transformation through experience. This was explored earlier in the chapter when discussing the historical intersection. However, specifically to spiritual formation, having firsthand experiences with God through the work of the Holy Spirit are a sign of spiritual formation and result in spiritual maturity. Each encounter with the Holy Spirit provides

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, First ed., vol. 28A, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 891-895, <http://www.theologyandreligiononline.com/tarocol/encyclopedia-chapter>.

<sup>53</sup> Ronald A. Horton, *Handbook of Christian Education* (Greenville, SC: Journeyforth, 2017), 12. Kindle.

<sup>54</sup> Rathod, "Role of Teachers," 91.

an opportunity for transformation in the heart, mind, and spirit. Calhoun explains the transformative work of the Holy Spirit saying, “the Holy Spirit knows the spiritual practices, relationships and experiences that best suit our unique communion with God.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the developer of ELT, David Kolb, defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”<sup>56</sup> The two interdisciplinary concepts, ELT and spiritual formation, are in complete alignment regarding the essentiality of experience as it relates to learning, growth, and development.

The third notable intersection between spiritual formation and ELT would be the mutual emphasis on practice as a means for facilitating progress, skill development, and growth. ELT sees practice as an experiential learning activity that is a critical component of the learning cycle for the purpose of providing an opportunity for learners to deliberately pursue the ideal or correct model of the behavior.<sup>57</sup> As it relates to spiritual formation, Christians practice the spiritual disciplines because Jesus commanded us to, and because it facilitates the process of conforming to his image. He also serves as not only the ideal or correct model for believers to follow, but he is also the perfect model given his nature and his works.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the intersections between Experiential Learning Theory within the discipline of education, and spiritual formation, located in the academic

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<sup>55</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 24, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>56</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 48.

<sup>57</sup> Kolb and Kolb, *The Experiential Educator*, 165.



discipline of theology has been examined and documented. The chapter began outlining the clear differences in emphasis, theoretical underpinnings, and effect between the knowledge-based educational approach and the skill-based educational approach. This was followed by a brief explanation as to the reason that the project hypothesizes that if congregants participate in a skill-based educational training on key spiritual disciplines, then they will be equipped with methodologies to implement those disciplines.

The chapter continued with a deeper exploration of the Experiential Learning Theory, which is a major theoretical underpinning of skill-based education, thus providing an interdisciplinary foundation on which to build the DMin project. After expounding upon how ELT addresses the research problem, ways that key constructs of ELT intersect with the main points extracted during the biblical exegesis outlined in chapter two were expounded upon. The detailed analysis of the biblical intersection demonstrated that even when science cannot explain a particular phenomenon, such as supernatural divine visitation, principals and patterns may still be evident. As asserted by the dialogue scientific model utilized throughout the chapter, religion and science are able to validate each other while respecting each discipline's unique differences.<sup>58</sup>

Next, the chapter examined the historical truths and insight found in the Pietist Movement and examined how those truths and insights intersect with key constructs of Experiential Learning Theory. The examination found significant overlap and demonstrated the pedagogical nature of history. The Pietists educators implemented experiential learning strategies before David Kolb or any of his educational theorist influences were born. However, Kolb's work of developing, publishing, and popularizing

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<sup>58</sup> Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, 9-12.

ELT empowers modern-day educators with resources to improve the efficacy of their educational endeavors.

Finally, the chapter explored the intersection of the theological underpinnings of spiritual formation and the theoretical constructs of ELT. Three notable intersections were outlined including imitation, transformation through experience, and practice.

This interdisciplinary chapter demonstrated coalescence, alignment, and coherence throughout the foundational chapters, which represent varying lenses through which to understand the problem this research seeks to address. This research informed, directed, and guided the development of the project plan. With this being the final foundations chapter, the focus now shifts to project implementation, learnings, and results.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

The doctoral project implemented at Dayspring Family Church examined our reliance on the traditional knowledge-based educational approach for teaching congregants about the spiritual disciplines. Given the centrality of the spiritual disciplines on the spiritual formation of every believer, over-reliance on the transmission of this information via lecture and reading can result in reduced efficacy of spiritual formation ministry efforts. However, the hypothesis for this project asserts that if congregants participate in a skill-based educational training on key spiritual disciplines, then they will be equipped with methodologies to implement those disciplines.

This project was developed through extensive reflection on the modern church, a needs assessment of Dayspring Family Church, my own experience engaging in the spiritual disciplines to support spiritual formation, and bi-vocational work educating and equipping others. All of these sources, when synergized, prompted both the examination of this challenge and the opportunity to promote spiritual formation in the local church by utilizing a transformational approach to educate believers on key spiritual disciplines.

Given the global spiritual, cultural, and political landscape, it is especially important that the church make disciples who steadily conform to the image of Christ. To accomplish this, the ministry of spiritual formation can no longer be seen as merely one

feature or one element of the church; it needs to be the main priority. Traditional educational approaches have been shown to have limited effectiveness as evidenced by the lack of life application and thus spiritual maturity amongst many believers.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, those traditional knowledge-based approaches must be set aside or supplemented with transformational approaches that are more effective in promoting spiritual formation in the local church.

The previous chapters provided a biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundation for the project's development and design. In review, chapter two discussed the biblical passage that undergirded the project, 1 Samuel 3:1-10. In that passage Samuel hears a voice calling him twice and believes that it is the voice of the priest, Eli. He goes to Eli in response, only to be given information that, though factual, did not contribute to Samuel's understanding, growth, or spiritual formation. However, when Eli discerned Samuel's need and remembered his actual role, he provided Samuel with experiential and practical instruction. Implementing the instruction positioned Samuel to reach a new stage in his spiritual formation journey and therefore, to receive a prophetic mission with far-reaching implications. The effectiveness of Eli's approach to spiritual mentorship and education informed this project's development by providing insight into the strategies that the ministry model should utilize to more effectively support project participants in their own spiritual formation journeys.

The Pietist Movement, discussed in chapter three, provided the historical foundation for the project. Pietists sought to inspire Lutherans in Germany to shift to a

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<sup>1</sup> Bill White, *Mature-Ish: Your Mission from God Should You Choose to Accept It* (Friendswood, TX: Baxter Press, 2021), 64.

more experiential faith by emphasizing simple and pure study of the bible, repentance, holy living, a deeply personal relationship with Christ, and love and sacrifice for others.<sup>2</sup> This project sought to do the same thing that the Pietists did in the seventeenth century. There are many ways that the Pietist movement and its original pontificators influenced the implementation of the doctoral project. While developing the six-week curriculum and engaging in learning design, aspects present in the Pietist classroom were infused throughout, including practical instruction, modeling, teachers and students intentionally giving and receiving constructive feedback, and cultivating a healthy community-focused learning environment.<sup>3</sup>

Spiritual formation, the theological theme undergirding this project and discussed at length in chapter four, is an essential spiritual process necessitated by the identity and purpose of every single believer. However, though experienced and taught by Jesus Christ himself, it is relatively under-emphasized in the local church.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, scholarship on the topic is dominated by white male theologians, further influencing the lack of diverse and universal understanding as well as practical integration into the daily lives of believers throughout much of the church, including this project's context.<sup>5</sup> The desire to illuminate the theological centrality of spiritual formation for project

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Gangel and Warren Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 172.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Gehrz, *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 60.

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Barton et al., "Spiritual Formation in the Church," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (November 2014): 296–299, <https://doi.org/10.1177/193979091400700212>.

<sup>5</sup> On the dominance of the white male perspective in theological scholarship and education, see Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2020); James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

participants informed every piece of course content and experiential activity within each lesson plan.

The goal of every research study is to produce measurable change within participants. However, proving through participant data that the proposed intervention was the clear mechanism for the change, makes for a project that others can replicate in hopes of similar results. For this project, the tested mechanism of change was the skill-based educational approach. Interdisciplinary research outlined in chapter five highlighted Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), a prominent theoretical underpinning of the skill-based educational approach. Ultimately, ELT provided a critical foundation for the development, refinement, and implementation of the project intervention.

The literature review outlined in the foundational chapters provided insight into the limitations of knowledge-based education and the opportunity to leverage other effective educational strategies to drive formation and growth. Drawing from these insights, I developed The REEFS Model, a formation-based educational framework that optimizes knowledge transfer, solidifies learnings, and drives life application, and implemented it in the skill-based training intervention referenced in the project hypothesis. This chapter will begin with an overview of The REEFS Model, outlining key components and definitions. It will then provide a detailed overview of the research methodology by outlining the research approach, design, and tools used for data collection. Third, details on exactly how the project data was managed and analyzed will be outlined. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary of findings by expounding on the results derived from an analysis of participant data and provide considerations for future research.

### **The REEFS Model: A Formation-Based Educational Framework**

The REEFS Model was developed by synthesizing my biblical, historical and theological research findings on spiritual formation, experiential learning theory, and the skill-based educational approach, and then merging it with my experiences and approach to supporting spiritual growth in believers. The name of the model serves two purposes—conceptual and mnemonic. Conceptually, reefs within nature function similarly to The REEFS Model within formation. In nature, reefs are ridges of material near the ocean’s surface that protect coastlines, support marine life, and promote aquaculture.<sup>6</sup> The REEFS model is an educational framework that protects believers, supports their lives, and promotes Kingdom culture through the process of spiritual formation. Mnemonically, R.E.E.F.S. is an acronym that outlines the essential components of a teaching session adhering to the model. The components are “Review,” “Expand,” “Experience,” “Feedback,” and “Set.”

During “Review” the focus is on providing an opportunity for students to recall and reflect on recent learnings or experiences. Additionally, the instructor should preview what will be learned in the current lesson, which peaks curiosity and anticipation. “Expand” is the segment of class that introduces and expounds on a new concept or an old concept in a fresh way. The “Expand” segment should be edifying and engaging for students—enabling new insights and increased depth in their understanding of the concept discussed. The “Experience” segment shifts the learning encounter from

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<sup>6</sup> National Geographic Society, s.v. "Reef," October 19, 2023, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/reef>.

conceptual to practical. It engages components of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) such as concrete experience, deliberate practice, and reflective observation. Key aspects of the skill-based educational approach should also be utilized including teacher modeling, hands-on training, flipped classrooms, and collaborative group activities. During the “Feedback” segment students are invited to share reflections on the “Experience” segment and the instructor is urged to share feedback on what they observed. Finally, the “Set” segment allows the instructor to set expectations for students around experimenting with newly learned concepts and practices and for students to set intentions around the same.

The REEFS Model was designed to align with how formation actually happens. It is memorable, applicable and theological. Importantly, project results demonstrated that when correctly implemented, it produces measurable cognitive, affective, and conative changes in congregants indicative of real spiritual formation and growth.

### **Project Methodology**

A qualitative research approach was utilized given the nature of the research topic, question, and context. The overarching topic of the research, spiritual formation, is generally a subjective process and a personal experience. Measuring this requires an approach that allows for the exploration of the meaning that individuals ascribe to spiritual formation. Stemming from that, the practice of spiritual disciplines were the behaviors and resulting experiences that the research questions engaged to measure individual spiritual formation. Finally, the research took place within each participant’s



own setting, Dayspring Family Church. These factors made a qualitative research approach the most appropriate and effective.

The project sought to determine the relationship between two variables, the skill-based educational approach and the implementation of the spiritual disciplines. More specifically, it sought to determine the degree to which a specific intervention would affect the dependent variable. Given the emphasis on the efficacy of a specific intervention on a defined group of participants bound by time and context, the research design utilized was a case study.

Mixed methods were employed for data collection. The quantitative strand of the research involved administering a questionnaire called the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale both pre-intervention and post-intervention. Additionally, pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires were administered that included both open-ended and close-ended questions. The close-ended questions included Likert scales, which allowed for quantitative analysis of participant change over time.

Alternatively, the qualitative strand of the research included focused journaling, individual participant interviews, and a focus group discussion. A convergent parallel strategic approach to data collection was taken, where qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time, analyzed separately, but then merged following the project during data analysis. The data collection methods holistically measured the conative, cognitive, and affective change within the participants across the intervention. Following a synergetic analysis, the data definitively supported the project hypothesis that implementing skill-based education enables congregants to effectively implement the spiritual disciplines, promoting spiritual formation.

### *Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Questionnaire*

This original questionnaire was composed of questions assessing the participants' understanding of the relationship between spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines, personal engagement with the spiritual disciplines, and understanding of the concepts of knowledge-based learning vs skill-based learning at the outset of the project. Comparing participants' responses to this questionnaire pre-project and post-project provided insight into the efficacy of the intervention and supported the hypothesis.

### *Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale*

The DSES is a well-established sixteen-item self-reporting measure written by Lynn Underwood.<sup>7</sup> Studies using the scale have reported strong internal consistency as indicated by Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.86 to 0.98.<sup>8</sup> The scale has been used in over 400 published studies and is designed to assess ordinary experiences with God in a person's daily life. The scale is relevant to the hypothesis given that spiritual disciplines are mechanisms for experiencing God in our daily lives. Additionally, it includes items that measure spiritual formation, including how one feels while connecting with God, feelings of awe toward God, gratitude, mercy; sense of connection or closeness to God, discernment of God's will and help in daily life, and feelings of compassionate love

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<sup>7</sup> Lynn Underwood, "Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Qualitative Research, Interpretive Guidelines, and Population Distribution for the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale," *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 28, no. 1 (January 2006): 181, <https://doi.org/10.1163/008467206777832562>.

<sup>8</sup> Lynn Underwood, "Scoring of the DSES," *Daily Spiritual Experience Scale*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.dsescall.org/scoring-of-the-daily-spiritual-experience-scale/>.

toward others. Prior to utilizing the scale in this research, a registration process was completed, and permission was provided by the scale's author.

### *Focused Journaling*

Participants were asked to write in a professionally printed and spiral-bound journal over the course of the six-week training program. Each week they were asked four reflective questions and their answers to them provided measurable insight into the participants' behaviors, perceptions, and experiences related to the project sessions and the topics they explored. This data collection method was chosen given its ability to provide rich experiential participant data throughout the intervention, filling the data gap between pre-intervention and post-intervention.

Weekly journaling questions followed a similar formula to track changes in the participant's responses to the questions over time.

Question 1: Describe the quality and frequency of your time with God over the past seven days.

Question 2: What topic, class activity, or interaction stood out or resonated the most in session? Why?

Question 3: This question varied week to week but always invited participants to reflect on a major concept from the foundational chapter that was reviewed that week.

- Week 1: Thinking of Samuel's story from Session 1, in what ways are you positioning yourself to hear from God? Write a one or two sentence prayer regarding your answer to this question.

- Week 2: Think back to your younger years. How did hands-on activities and practicing the concept or task in class impact your confidence in doing the task later all on your own? Do you believe the same applies for biblical concepts and spiritual practices as well? Why or why not?
- Week 3: Early Pietists believed that genuine Christianity involves the simple and pure study of the bible, repentance, holy living, a deeply personal relationship with Christ, and love and sacrifice for others. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Week 4: What does reflecting the image of God, or *imago Dei*, mean to you? Write a one or two sentence prayer about your answer to this question.
- Week 5: In Session 5 we learned that Jesus underwent spiritual formation and regularly practiced the spiritual disciplines. How does that influence your thoughts on your own spiritual formation journey and your practice of the spiritual disciplines?

Question 4: If you practiced the spiritual discipline of [the discipline discussed that week] sometime this past week, describe the experience. If not, describe either your intention to try it in the future or your feelings of hesitation to try it, if you have any.

### *Focus Group Discussion*

A structured focus group discussion was conducted during the final training session with all participants. Participants were asked questions about their opinions, perspectives, and experiences on the overall project and in relation to specific project themes. The discussion-based format also gave participants the opportunity to

collectively process how they experienced the project and reflect on the mutual growth that had occurred.

### *Individual Participant Interviews*

Meeting with individual participants post-intervention provided valuable insight into how the overall training impacted them on a personal level. Interviews were held on Zoom and the audio was recorded. They were all completed within two weeks of the end of the course. Seven participants completed the optional individual interview following project completion.

### *Data Collection*

Pre-intervention data, both the questionnaire and the DSES, were administered in paper format and collected directly from participants immediately following completion. Physical participant journals were provided to participants, who maintained possession of their journals through the duration of the entire project and participants returned them at the final session. Post-intervention data included the questionnaire, DSES, focus group discussion, and participant interviews. The post-intervention questionnaire and DSES were also administered in paper format and collected in the final session. The participant ID, which was assigned to each participant during the first session, was the only identifier on all physical data administered and collected to ensure participant confidentiality. The focus group discussion and individual participant interview recordings were securely recorded and digitally stored.

### **Project Implementation**

The project began with a congregational awareness and registration phase that launched three weeks prior to the first session. Information about how to register and how to obtain and sign the informed consent forms were shared during an announcement video played during the worship services. To support the implementation of the skill-based educational model, registration was limited to the first twenty-five people. An assumption was made that a couple of registrants would not be able to complete the project, and the goal was to have at least twenty students complete the project in its entirety.

#### *Participants and Project Team*

Twenty-one congregants of Dayspring Family Church participated in the project. Twenty-four registered and began the project, however three congregants were unable to complete it due to scheduling conflicts and changes in life circumstances. The twenty-one participants represented a diverse segment of the congregation, with ages ranging from mid-twenties to seventies. The group was diverse in terms of their level of spiritual maturity and involvement in ministry within the local church. There was also a cross-section of daily routines and demographics, with representation from individuals who were married, single, working, entrepreneurs, retired, clergy, laypersons, parents with young children, and parents of adult children. Given the project emphasis on the impact that the church's educational approach has on their congregant's engagement with the

spiritual disciplines, the diverse make-up of the participant group strengthened the project.

Context associates, members of the congregation chosen to support the project implementation, were regularly consulted on the practical needs of the context and logistical planning in the months leading up to the course. One of the context associates is the Sunday School Superintendent at Dayspring. He was a critical source of insight and guidance on how to implement this unique ministry model within the context while leveraging relevant norms. Two of the context associates are long-term educators at Dayspring Family Church and brought significant related experience to the project. Another context associate is an ordained elder at the church. They served as a resource for congregants participating in the program if they needed additional spiritual counsel or support throughout the duration of the project. During classroom sessions, context associates provided classroom assistance during sessions with media support, student handout and supply distribution, as well as support with ensuring sessions stayed on track from a timing perspective.

Professional associates were also consulted regarding the project design, content, and the implementation plan, with specific focus on the needs of the context and best practices. The professional associate with a specialization in curriculum design and instruction provided critical guidance and resources on best practices for designing a unique and transformational curriculum that aligned with the skill-based educational approach and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). The professional associate with extensive experience in adult education and the organization of spiritual growth-focused events provided practical tips and strategies for implementing an educational program

with the explicit goal of facilitating spiritual formation. A third professional associate, who serves as a pastor in a comparable ministry context and has successfully implemented numerous Christian education initiatives and events, provided relevant insight and guidance on implementing such an effort at the project context. She also shared an important perspective on the role and approach of congregational leadership as it relates to facilitating the spiritual formation of the congregants.

### *Project Overview*

The project, titled “From Practice to Presence: Experiencing Christ Through the Spiritual Disciplines,” was conducted over eight weeks. There were six weeks of structured skill-based sessions exploring spiritual formation and key spiritual disciplines followed by an additional two weeks of post-intervention data collection. Each session was facilitated by me and took place in a large classroom at Dayspring Family Church. Student handouts were provided weekly as an additional resource. The weekly session flow implemented the REEFS Model as follows:

- Review – a grounding segment including a welcome, lookback on previous week, and session preview
- Expand – an edifying and thought-provoking teaching segment on major concepts within the highlighted foundations chapter
- Experience – a skill-based segment on a key spiritual discipline
- Feedback – a segment set aside for teacher and students to provide mutual feedback



- Set – an expectation and intention setting segment for previewing homework, setting goals, and aligning those with God through prayer.

The first session began with an introductory overview of the purpose of the doctoral project, expectations, and anticipated outcomes. Pre-intervention questionnaires and a DSES scale were administered to all participants and submitted prior to beginning the foundation-based expansion teaching, which centered the project's focal text, 1 Samuel 3:1-10. The teaching expounded on Samuel's three exchanges with Eli and four calls from God. Participants learned about the role of church leaders and teachers to ensure they utilized educational approaches that empower believers to apply biblical truth to their daily lives. They also learned the importance of positioning and posturing themselves to experience God, as Samuel did.

The experiential skill-based education segment on the spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude made an indelible impression on participants as confirmed during class as well as in the data collected. Participants engaged in silence and solitude for twenty uninterrupted minutes. They were tasked with refraining from audibly talking, using their cell phones, or engaging in anything other than intentional time with God. Prayer stations were placed throughout the church for them to visit if they desired. According to reflections shared following the segment, this activity was transformative for many participants and created a high sense of anticipation for the remainder of the project.

The second session emphasized concepts from the interdisciplinary foundation chapter including the traditional knowledge-based educational approach, the skill-based educational approach, and Experiential Learning Theory. Participants expanded their

understanding of the relationship between experience and transformational learning. The skill-based segment built on the interdisciplinary foundation teaching by focusing on the spiritual discipline of worship, which is often experiential, and is most transformative when it is yielded to the Holy Spirit, who amongst other things, is a teacher. Participants also engaged in an experiential worship activation and practice activity. Over the course of twenty-five minutes, skill-based instruction was given to help participants engage in the spiritual discipline of worship was provided to facilitate concrete individual, small group, and corporate worship and learning experiences.

The major concepts of the historical foundations chapter were highlighted in the third session. The parallels between the Lutheran church and medieval European cultural context that birthed the Pietist Movement, and the Protestant Church and American cultural context of this time were shared with the participants to help them to see its daily relevance. Participants learned about the key leaders of the Pietist Movement and how their approaches still have value today. As mentioned in chapter three, elements of the Christian faith that the Pietists emphasized were the “simple and pure study of the bible, repentance, holy living, a deeply personal relationship with Christ, and love and sacrifice for others.”<sup>9</sup>

The spiritual discipline highlighted during the “Experience” segment for week three was bible intake, which includes bible reading, bible study, scripture memorization, and scriptural meditation. Given the central role that bible intake had in the lives of the Pietists discussed in that session, the skill-based segment offered practicality in support of the concepts discussed earlier in the session. Participants were instructed on engaging

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<sup>9</sup> Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 172.

in the ancient spiritual discipline of *Lectio Divina*. Following brief instructions, participants engaged in “deliberate practice,” a component of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), where students practice a concept learned for a considerable amount of time.<sup>10</sup> Participants were asked to practice *Lectio Divina* together as a class. They read Psalm 119:11 in unison three times. This was followed by a few minutes of silent reflection. Then, they were instructed to pray as a response to God following their reflection time. Finally, they were invited to silently rest in God’s presence with an open mind and open ears. Following this experiential activity, in alignment with the ELT learning model, participants were provided with an opportunity to share feedback and reflect on the concrete learning experience. What occurred during that reflection moment resonated with many of the participants. Numerous participants shared what they heard and experienced individually while engaging in *Lectio Divina*. Both the overlapping impressions from the Holy Spirit that participants reported and the diversity in the revelation shared from Psalm 119:11 resulted in a particularly memorable educational experience.

The fourth session explored important elements of the theological foundation of the project. Specifically, participants expanded their insight into the concept of spiritual formation and its continued relevance throughout the entire lifetime of all believers. The believer’s identity as made in the image of God, or *Imago Dei*, was also emphasized since it was crucial for participants to understand the connection between spiritual

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<sup>10</sup> Alice Kolb and David Kolb, *The Experiential Educator: Principles and Practices of Experiential Learning* (Kaunakakai, HI: Experience Based Learning Systems, 2017), 165.

formation and their identity so that they understood the relevancy of the project theme to their lives.

The skill-based education segment emphasized the point that spiritual disciplines are a means for facilitating the spiritual formation process. Appropriately then, the spiritual discipline of prayer, which is the mechanism that believers use to communicate to God, was the spiritual discipline highlighted in that session. The practical purposes of prayer were shared with participants. These included connection, expression, clarification, intercession, confession, and reflection. The session concluded with a skill-based training on utilizing the Apostolic prayers found interspersed throughout the New Testament as both models and launching ramps when engaging in the spiritual discipline of prayer. Simultaneously, participants were invited to physically engage by assuming different prayer postures based on the type of apostolic prayer we were engaging at the time. They were encouraged to kneel when the prayer compelled them to surrender, to sit when they wanted to listen intently, to walk when the prayer was more conversational, and to stand when they wanted to declare God's promises. During this session participants expressed that the Apostolic Prayer activity was a new resource that supported their spiritual goals and was immediately applicable—both key elements of effective education amongst adults learners.

Session five continued the exploration of the theological foundation of the project. Participants were introduced to Christology as it relates to the model for spiritual formation Jesus provided during his life on earth. Jesus' devotional practices that he regularly engaged in to remain connected to God, the Father, were highlighted to serve as both examples and reminders to the participants of the importance of engaging in the

spiritual disciplines. The session also involved a more substantive theological examination of spiritual disciplines in relation to spiritual formation. Participants learned that while the spiritual disciplines are tools that God has graciously given believers to support the spiritual formation process, they are not to be seen as the goal, like many Pharisees were described to have done. A quote from John Wesley that was shared to further illustrate this point stated, “Spiritual disciplines are not the ‘ends’ of spiritual formation, but the ‘means’ through which the Spirit works to transform us into Christlikeness.”<sup>11</sup>

Fasting, a regular devotional practice that Jesus engaged in and expected from his followers, was highlighted as a key spiritual discipline during the skill-based education segment. After sharing some practical instruction on the purpose, benefits, and considerations of fasting as a discipline, participants were led through an experiential learning activity meant to translate fasting theoretically into fasting in actuality. Two tables that had been set up prior to the session time and covered until the activity began were revealed to participants. One table represented a feast full of distractions and was littered with the distracting things in which we often indulge. Snacks, a cell phone with a social media platform open, a tablet with a streaming platform open, shopping receipts, and cash were some of the items placed on that table. Conversely, the second table represented a feast of God’s presence. An open bible, a candle, and a display stand with a scripture made up the feast on that table. Participants lined up and slowly walked around the two tables while considering reflection points:

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<sup>11</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler, Modern Critical ed., *Sermons I*, 1-33 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:381.

1. Reflect on what you feast on when overwhelmed.
2. What would it look like in your life to fast from things on the distraction table and feast on God's presence instead?

Participants were encouraged to write down some insights from their reflection time. This particular experiential activity proved to resonate with many of the participants as evidenced by their focused journaling entries reflecting on that session.

According to Morse, spiritual formation is “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God and for the sake of others.”<sup>12</sup> The sixth and final session of the project focused on the last clause of that definition—for the sake of others. It addresses an outcome of spiritual formation that believers experience as they are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. The teaching portion of the session highlighted Christ's compassion in his interactions with Mary and Martha as they grieved the death of their brother, Lazarus. Participants learned how important it is to model that same compassion in our daily lives. In the biblical text Jesus says, “Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.”<sup>13</sup> Christ embodied compassion for others from his miraculous birth all the way to his sacrificial death on the cross. During session six, participants were reminded that as believers, spiritual formation is conforming to Christ, which includes conforming to his character and to his commitment to building the kingdom of God.

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<sup>12</sup> Marykate Morse, “Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Formation: Which Is What?” *Missio Alliance*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.missioalliance.org/evangelism-discipleship-and-spiritual-formation-which-is-what/>.

<sup>13</sup> John 11:14-15, *New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). Hereafter, all scripture references NRSV unless stated otherwise.

Following the lesson, the session transitioned to the focus group discussion. Participants were asked reflective questions and for authentic feedback on the project. Many participants shared specific feedback with examples that provided substantive data for future analysis. The final session concluded with the administration of the post-intervention questionnaire and a Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale. Journals were collected simultaneously as participants finished completing the questionnaire and DSES. All participants submitted a journal containing written responses, except for Participant 618-12, who did not journal during the course of the project, but was otherwise engaged.

Participants were invited to complete an individual interview within two weeks of the final session. A scheduling link through the Google Appointments platform was provided and they were able to select a time that worked best with their schedules. Seven participants completed an interview that was securely recorded with their consent.

### *Data Management*

Following project completion, the data management phase began. As an important first step, the data was prepared for analysis. All journal entries, participant interviews, and the focus group discussion were meticulously transcribed from their original format into a format that would more readily allow for detailed analysis. They were organized into separate word processing files with a consistent naming convention that clearly labeled them by participant ID and data type. Questionnaire and DSES data were transcribed over to two spreadsheets, one containing data collected pre-intervention and the other containing the post-intervention data. Each participant's responses were listed in a separate row.

NVivo, a qualitative data management software program, was used to store, organize, and support robust analysis of all data collected from project participants. Cases were created for each participant within the software, and all journal and interview files were imported and linked to their respective case. The spreadsheets containing questionnaire and DSES data were also imported into NVivo, and each participant's responses were linked to their respective case as well. Finally, the focus group discussion transcript was imported into NVivo. Since it would be analyzed as a whole, it was not linked to individual participants. Each file was classified by data type and the intervention phase it was collected in to enable precise analysis of both individual-level change and the group's collective change across the duration of the project. The four data type labels were questionnaire, journal, focus group, and interview. The five intervention phases were labeled as pre-intervention, early intervention, mid-intervention, late intervention, and post-intervention. Additionally, participant session attendance records, DSES responses, and responses to the close-ended questions within the questionnaires were attached to their case within NVivo as attributes. This setup allowed for those attributes to be cross-referenced with all data connected to a participant and for it to be segmented by time (i.e., intervention phase).

The qualitative data analysis process undertaken was quite extensive. Extracting reliable and valid results from the large amount of nuanced textual data required a dynamic process of ingesting, organizing, reflecting, and interpreting that data. The widely respected Braun and Clarke reflexive thematic analysis framework was leveraged as a resource to guide the analytical process for this project. Reflexive thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke, includes six phases: familiarization with the data,



generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.<sup>14</sup> At the start of the analysis stage, some familiarization with the data had already occurred during data preparation; however, prior to beginning the coding process, each participant's data file was read again. Then, during the initial coding phase, each data file was read line-by-line and when any phrase, sentence, or text segment had relevance to the project hypothesis, it was coded. During initial coding, descriptive codes summarizing the participant's phrase or sentence were manually applied. If the content of a phrase or sentence matched a code that was already in the codebook, it was coded to that existing code. If a phrase or sentence was not already represented in the codebook a new code was created. After coding one participant's journal entries, I realized that it would be helpful to connect the descriptive code to an analytical code that explained my interpretation of the statement as the researcher and connect it to the project hypothesis. Examples of analytical codes developed include behavioral change expressions, increased insight into importance of spiritual formation, and increased sense of connectedness to God. The analytical code development process supported the third phase of the reflexive thematic analysis of searching for themes, as I was able to group the analytical codes into initial themes that had surfaced in the data.

During the fourth and fifth phases, the initial themes were organized as sub-folders within one of five major folders: barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines, affective change, cognitive change, conative change, and impact of educational approach. For codebook consistency, this organizational approach was

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<sup>14</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (January 2006): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

applied to all of the descriptive codes as well. Coding reliability and accuracy were also prioritized during this phase. Coding queries were run to ensure there were no cross-coding errors. Codes that were similar were merged to ensure integrity with code count. Following a final review of the codebook, the codebook was considered closed, and I entered phase six of the thematic analysis framework.

Finally, NVivo's analytic tools were leveraged to cross-reference data dimensions, reveal intersections, and identify patterns across the data. Matrix coding queries generated tables that visualized how often and where there were intersections between analytic dimensions—cases (participants), codes, attributes, themes, and intervention phases. Compound queries were run to further examine coding intersections by isolating specific coded references overlaps where multiple concepts appeared together. They also isolated references where one concept was mentioned but another one was not. These queries revealed data clusters specifically related to the variables examined in the project hypothesis. Generated matrices were then exported into Excel where they were converted to graphs and other visualizations, which will be reviewed later in this chapter. These aggregated data results and representative excerpts are included in this chapter; however, full datasets will be retained in compliance with IRB data protection and confidentiality protocols.

The approach used to organize and analyze data collected during this project was intentionally rigorous to support the significance of the findings for the project context itself, but also the church more broadly. Although NVivo served as a digital workspace for storing, organizing, and examining the large amount of textual data, all analytical decisions were made by me. Code development, code assignment, thematic extraction,

data interpretation, and all analytic insights were a result of hundreds of hours of close reading, reflection, and memo writing about the rich data collected from project participants. Ultimately, the data definitively confirmed what was observed and experienced during project implementation.

### **Summary of Learnings**

Again, the goal of this doctoral project was to learn whether, and to what extent, the over-reliance on the traditional knowledge-based educational approach by churches impacts the efficacy of their efforts to disciple and promote spiritual formation in their congregants. The hypothesis was that if congregants participate in a skill-based educational training on key spiritual disciplines, then they will be equipped with methodologies to implement those disciplines. An anticipated result was that through the introduction and implementation of six weeks of skill-based instruction, over the course of the project participants would exhibit measurable affective, cognitive, and conative change as it relates to indicators of spiritual formation. Additionally, it would be demonstrated conclusively through the data that participants who resonated most with the skill-based elements of the course would exhibit the most indicators of spiritual formation amongst the group of participants, providing further evidence that the skill-based educational approach was the primary mechanism of change.

As discussed in the implementation section, to enable a robust and synergetic analysis of the wide-ranging data collected from participants, all project questionnaires, journal entries, participant interviews, DSES responses, and the focus group transcript were meticulously coded within the qualitative data analysis platform utilized, NVivo.

For example, in response to question one of the week two journal prompts, which asked participants to describe the quality and frequency of their time with God over the past seven days, Participant 618-14 shared “I am reading and praying daily. I’m listening to my worship music and letting it usher me into God’s presence.” Given the relevance of this statement to the hypothesis, it was coded to all relevant codes. The descriptive codes it was coded to were “time with God was substantive and good quality” and since they mentioned daily practice, “expressed actually practicing spiritual disciplines routinely in previous week.” The corresponding analytical code it was coded to was “participant confirmed engaging in implementing the spiritual disciplines in previous seven days.” Though some phrases or sentences were coded to just one relevant descriptive code and analytical code, a procedural decision was made to not limit a phrase to just a single code per code type. This ensured that when participant statements or phrases expressed multiple types of change, all ways in which the intervention was impacting the participants would be reflected in the analysis. To reference the entire codebook, which lists each code and where it was organized within NVivo, see Appendix G.

### *Cognitive Change Over Time*

Again, for the purposes of analysis, the project was split into five intervention phases: pre-intervention, early intervention, mid-intervention, late intervention, and post-intervention. The pre-intervention phase included the pre-intervention questionnaire and pre-intervention DSES scores. The early intervention phase involved data from week one and week two journal responses. The mid-intervention phase referenced only the week three journal responses while the late intervention phase referenced week four and week

five journal responses. The post-intervention phase, referencing the largest subset of the data, included the post-intervention questionnaire, post-intervention DSES scores, focus group discussion, and participant interviews. This organization of the data enabled isolation and analysis of all participant data by time period.

Following a review of all coded references from the pre-intervention phase data, it was evident that the project participants generally came to the first session with limited familiarity and understanding of the terms explored in the pre-course questionnaire. These included the terms “spiritual formation,” “spiritual disciplines,” “knowledge-based learning,” and “skill-based learning.” In the pre-intervention questionnaire, some shared explicitly that they were not at all familiar with the terms. Others gave definitions based on what they logically presumed the terms meant, such as one participant who defined spiritual formation as “the act of God changing you in the spirit and aligning you to be in formation with his plan” and knowledge-based learning as “building up on the knowledge that you have already obtained.” Some participants began with relatively stronger awareness of spiritual formation, mentioning key definitional elements such as “a process,” “becoming,” and “like Christ.” A few participants defined skill-based learning as “learning by doing” and “more hands on,” demonstrating a general awareness of the educational approach prior to the course beginning.

However, as the project went on participants gained increased insight into the relationship between spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines as well as the importance of regularly engaging in them. Participant 618-07 shared the following quote in their week five journal entry, “I have begun to see the importance of my alone time with God. Just having a real conversation with him. Letting him speak to me. I have seen

the change in my life for myself.” Question two of the questionnaire that participants completed pre-intervention and post-intervention explicitly asked, “What is the relationship between spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines?” This is visually represented in Figure 2. The number of participants who had a moderate to strong understanding increased from nine to nineteen and the number of those who had low or no understanding reduced from twelve pre-intervention to only one post-intervention.

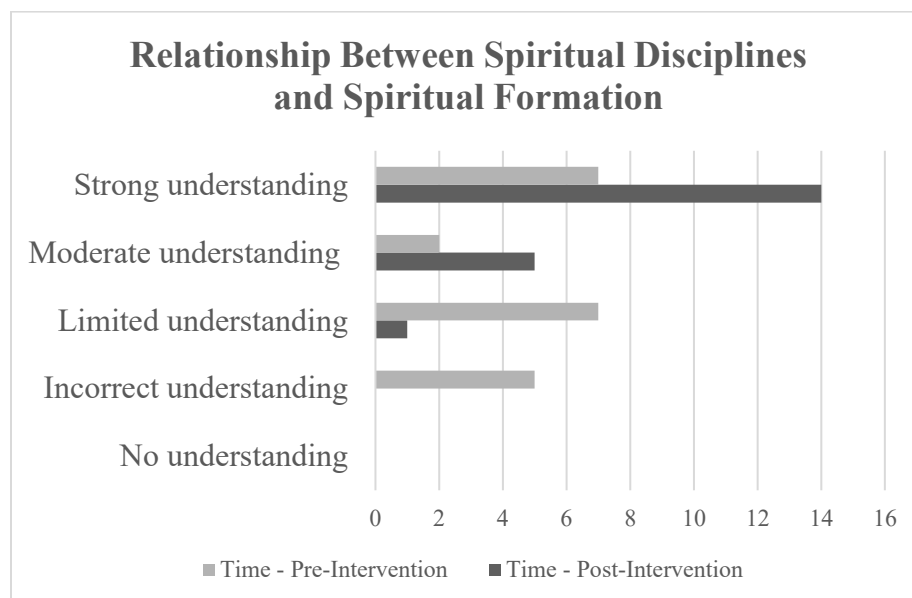


Figure 2. Chart showing the pre- and post-intervention questionnaire results of question two.

Another important cognitive learning objective of this project involved increasing participant insight into the impact that this educational approach can have on spiritual formation. To assess this change over time, question six of the questionnaire asked, “How would you define skill-based learning?” Pre-intervention data showed three participants (14%) had a strong understanding, eight participants (38%) had a moderate understanding, and ten participants (48%) had limited or incorrect understanding. However, at post-intervention sixteen (76%) had a strong understanding, five (24%) had

a moderate understanding, and no participants had limited or incorrect understanding (see Figure 3).

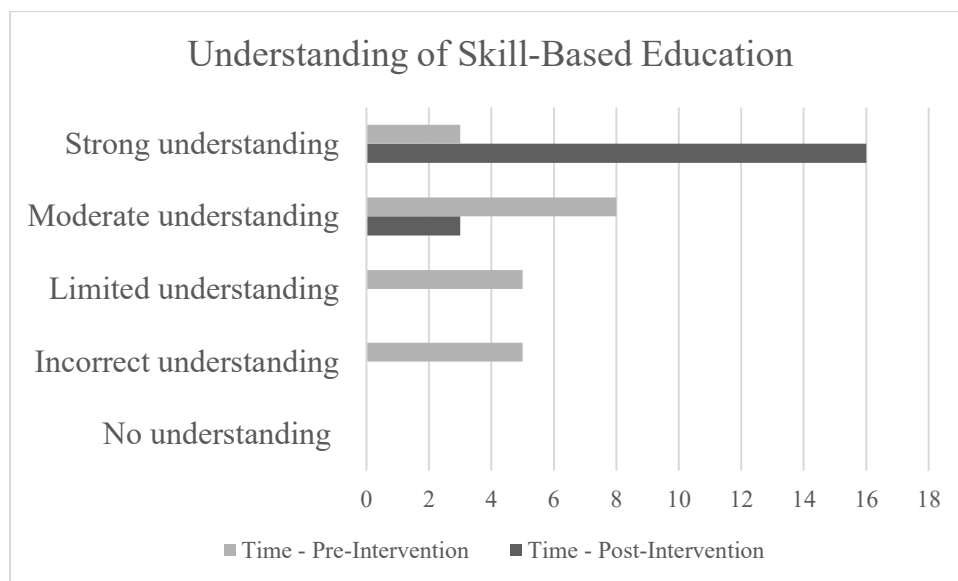


Figure 3. Chart showing the pre- and post-intervention questionnaire results of question six.

Though the significantly increased understanding of skill-based education is a compelling outcome, the data point more clearly indicative of cognitive change related to the project goals was whether participants changed their beliefs or thinking as it relates to the project hypothesis. Question seven directly assessed this research question asking participants, “Do you believe the educational style/approach used in churches impacts the spiritual growth and development of church members? Why or why not?” Figure 4 shows that pre-intervention only seven participant responses (33%) indicated strong insight into the impact of educational approach compared to seventeen participants responses (81%) doing so post-intervention. This represents an overwhelming shift in participant perception of the church’s role and ability to leverage transformative educational approaches to promote spiritual formation among congregants, providing strong support for the project hypothesis.

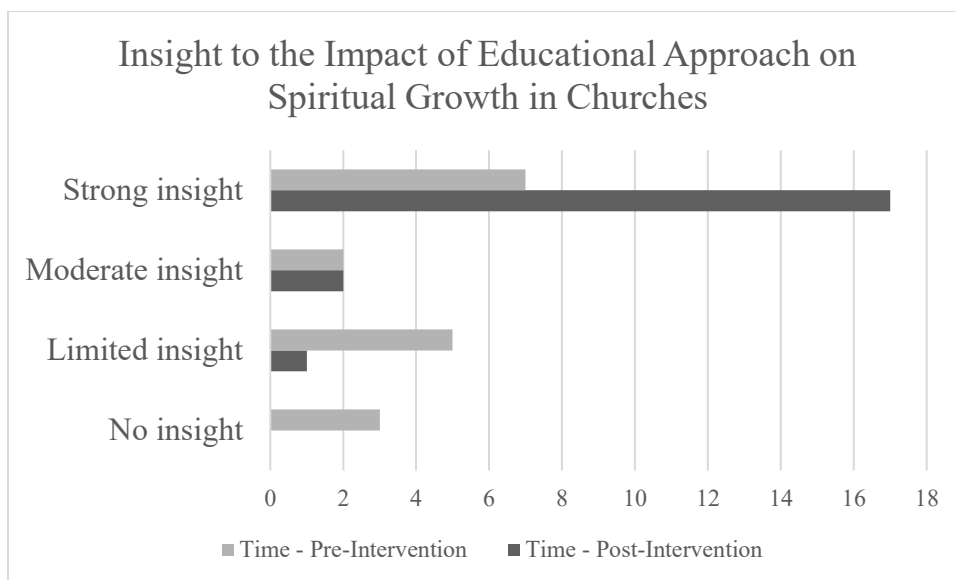


Figure 4. Chart showing pre- and post-intervention questionnaire results of question seven.

#### *Affective Change Over Time*

Clear expressions of affective change, which measure changes in feelings, emotions, or experiences, were found in participant data across the entire project duration. Participants shared numerous examples of an increased desire to hear from and experience God. Instances of spiritual breakthroughs and transformative experiences were compellingly documented in participant journals. Participant 618-13 wrote the following sentiment in her week three journal entry, “Since I signed up with this class, I have been in awe. My frequency with God has become fluent. My spirit has become unsettled when I miss the times I have allotted for my time with my Father.” Meanwhile, Participant 618-07 shared just how transformational the class had been while only in the early intervention phase writing, “I can hear God speaking to me in a new way. My relationship with God is fresh and all the things in my life have become new. I am beginning to see that God has a plan for my life.” These participant quotes on how the



project prompted notable affective change were not isolated. Coded references in the affective change category within NVivo were assigned across five analytical codes: “positive emotional state expressed,” “increased sense of connection to God,” “expressed experiencing a spiritual breakthrough or transformative moment,” “increase in desire for God’s presence and influence,” and “increased desire for spiritual formation.” As seen in Figure 5, there were over ninety-four participant references in this change category that began as early as week one and continued throughout the project.

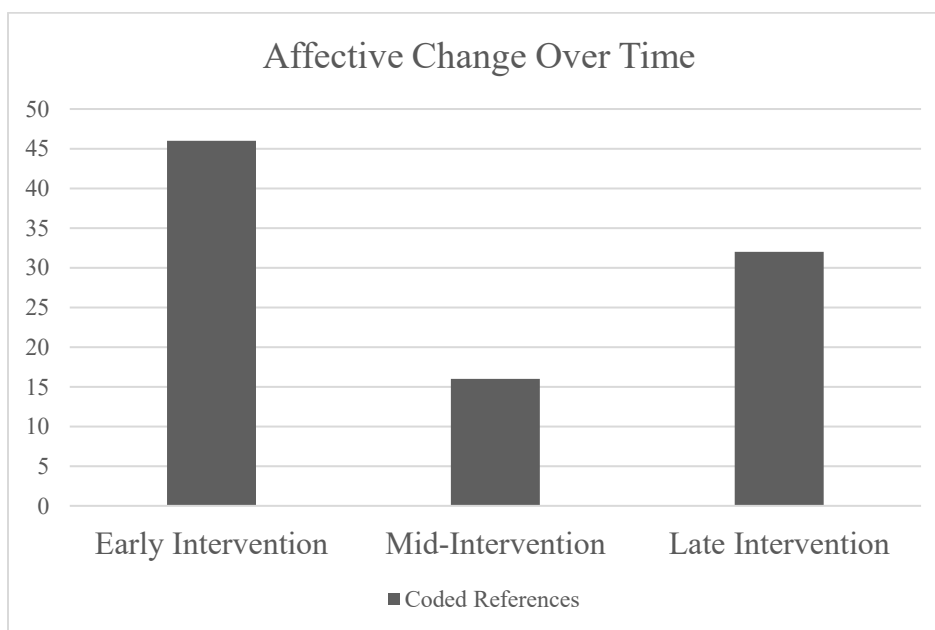


Figure 5. Chart showing the number of coded references of affective change over time

The project goal of producing affective change by providing a spiritual educational atmosphere that would prompt new desires, motivations, feelings, and experiences was clearly documented and captured in participant journals. However, in alignment with best practices for data analysis, this observation would benefit from being triangulated with quantitative data that was collected, which in this project included the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES).

The DSES data provided additional compelling evidence of substantial affective change resulting from the project. The highly validated scale includes sixteen self-reported items, or questions, compiled to measure the frequency of ordinary spiritual experiences in individuals. The response options for items one through fifteen are “many times a day,” “every day,” “most days,” “some days,” “once in a while,” and “never.” To enable scoring, these responses were assigned a numerical value of six to zero, respectively. Item sixteen only has four response options, “as close as possible,” “very close,” “somewhat close,” and “not at all.” Responses for that question were assigned a numerical value of three to zero, respectively.

The mean (average) DSES score for the project class pre-intervention was 4.78 and it increased to 5.31 post-intervention, indicating an 11.09% average increase. This change was statistically significant as confirmed by a paired samples t-test that showed a significance level ( $p < .0001$ ). A significance level this small provided compelling evidence that the change in the daily spiritual experiences across participants was tied to the project and had less than a one in ten thousand probability of happening by chance. However, a supplemental analysis was then completed to measure exactly how consistent, substantive, or meaningful the change in daily spiritual experiences of participants was. The supplemental analysis involved calculating the standardized effect size, or Cohen’s *d*. Cohen’s *d* quantifies the size and consistency of change in the same group of people at two different time points (i.e., pre vs post). It reveals how meaningful an impact and intervention were and whether most participants experienced the impact, or just a few did. The standard for interpreting the magnitude of effect sizes was outlined in Cohen (1988) and considers a small effect .20, a medium effect .50, and a large

effect .80.<sup>15</sup> The DSES pre-project and post-project scores had a standardized effect size, or Cohen's *d*, of 1.07, representing a very large effect. An effect size of that magnitude for an educational intervention is quite significant. As a point of reference, in *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*, a frequently cited book that examines the efficacy of educational interventions, John Hattie synthesizes over 900 meta-analyses, and found the average educational intervention has an effect size of 0.40.<sup>16</sup>

Project participants experienced affective change that was both observable and measurable. However, one of the most significant project findings was that the affective and cognitive change prompted actual practical change, resulting in true transformation. The next section of this chapter will outline the data that revealed how the skill-based educational program on spiritual disciplines accomplished this.

### *Conative Change Over Time*

The dependent variable of the project hypothesis was implementation of spiritual disciplines. Implementation requires action and goal-directed behavior. Given this, conative change was the key success metric that this project sought to impact. Project data showed that as a result of participating in the training, participants had demonstrable conative change as indicated by shifts in commitment, intentions, and behaviors around the project theme of spiritual formation.

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<sup>15</sup> LeCroy, Craig Winston, and Judy Krysik, "Understanding and Interpreting Effect Size Measures," *Social Work Research* 31, no. 4 (2007): 245, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42659906>.

<sup>16</sup> John Hattie, *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* (London: Routledge, 2012), 2.

Question two of the project questionnaire asked participants, “How frequently do you engage in practicing the spiritual disciplines at home or independently?” The response options were presented as a Likert scale and included: Not at all, a few times a year, a few times a month, a few times a week, almost daily, and daily. To enable analysis, response options were assigned a numerical value of one through six, respectively. This particular question was asked because it would provide a quantitative way to measure the key behavioral change outcome for this project, implementing the spiritual disciplines in daily life. The mean score across the group of participants increased by 9.7% between pre-intervention and post-intervention assessments.

Qualitative data collected also revealed evidence that the skill-based educational model tested in this project drove conative change that promoted spiritual formation in participants. After reviewing all references coded to conative change in aggregate within NVivo, clear themes across the participants came to the surface. Participants were generally open to the skill-based educational approach, became early adopters, and were almost immediately compelled to take personal action. For example, worship was the spiritual discipline highlighted in week two. In their week two journal entry Participant 618-04 shared,

I truly embodied this discipline throughout the week as I moved about my day. I found myself not only worshiping but intentionally worshiping and singing scripture especially during some of my difficult days. What I found is that this helped my anxiety, restless mind, and truly calmed my spirit. It helped center my spiritual and physical being, focus on God and giving him the word of God back!

This participant’s journal entry is evidence of a core ability of skill-based instruction to provide an immediate opportunity to practice concepts learned and thus increase the likelihood that newly developed skills will be implemented into the learner’s daily life.

Mid-intervention data revealed that during that phase of the project participants began to demonstrate growth in their practice, experience barrier resolution, as well as exhibit consistency in spiritual discipline practice and outcome. Participants relayed that they were practicing more frequently after identifying ways that were compatible with their lifestyle and daily schedule. For example, one participant wrote the following in their week three journal entry, “The quiet time and listening to God speak to me has become so real. Time with God is a blessing. I see growth in me because of my time with God.” The experiences that participants were having in class were translating into independent engagement in the spiritual disciplines and were resulting in meaningful spiritual formation.

Late intervention data provided additional validation of the hypothesis through numerous references where participants shared that as a result of the class, despite having barriers to engaging in the spiritual disciplines earlier on, they had reached a breakthrough in their devotional life and were engaging in behaviors they previously never had. For instance, in their week four journal entry Participant 618-11, who shared in the early intervention stage that she has often fallen asleep while trying to spend quality time with God in his word, wrote “Since starting this [class] I have found myself praying more frequently even in times I normally wouldn't.” Another example would be Participant 618-06, who shared in their week one journal entry that recent personal challenges had negatively impacted their devotional life and also wrote, “I don't know what's blocking me from spending time with God!” in their week three journal entry. However, after continued engagement in the classes and persistent application of what they were learning, barriers to meaningfully engaging in the spiritual disciplines were

resolved by week five. This was documented in question one of their week five journal entry, which asked for a description of the quality and frequency of their time with God over the past seven days, where Participant 618-06 wrote, “I have been in my word daily this week, doing devotionals and applying and reading scripture along with it. I have already noticed a difference in my mood and the quality of my day!”

Conative change was notable and consistently documented across almost all participants. Additionally, similarly to their affective change, their conative change was consistent across the entire project duration. That type of immediate and sustained impact infers efficacy in an intervention. “Application and practice of the disciplines” was a category within the “Analytical Codes” folder of the codebook dedicated for coding references related to the quality and frequency of the participant’s time with God engaging in the spiritual disciplines. There were four codes within this category that references were assigned to: “increase in comfort level practicing the spiritual disciplines,” “increased quality of experiences,” “participant confirmed engaging in implementing the spiritual disciplines in previous seven days,” and “increased frequency of practice.” As seen in Figure 6, a considerable 248 references were coded to the conative change category, further demonstrating that skill-based education was effective in promoting increases in quality and frequency of practice consistently over time.

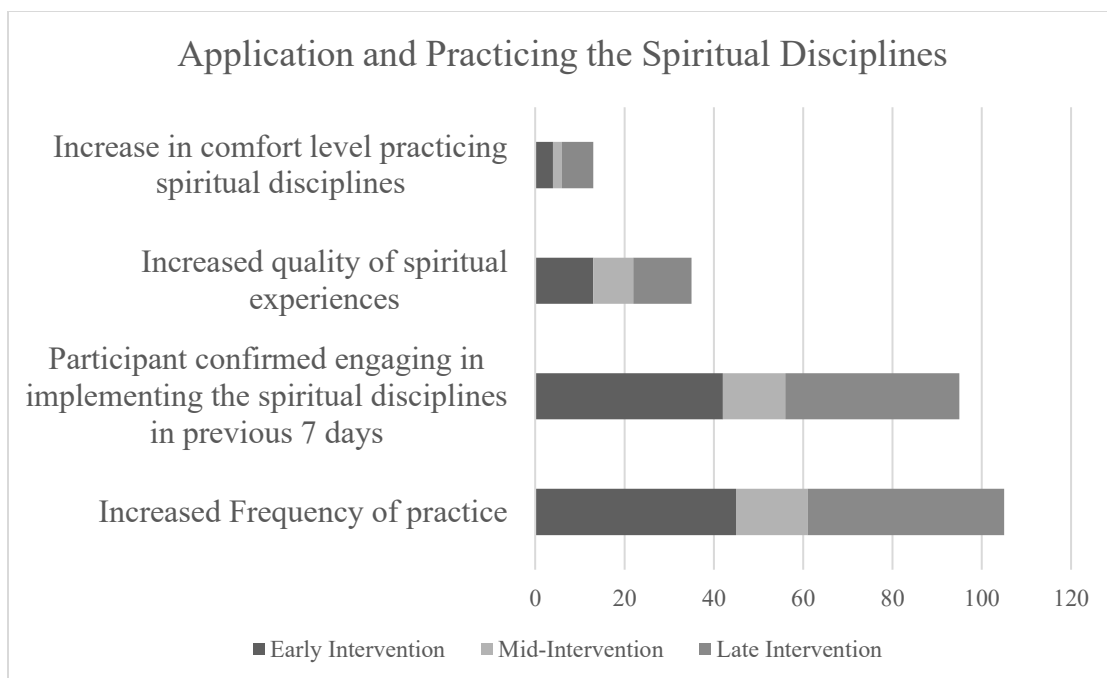


Figure 6. Chart showing coded references indicating practice of the spiritual disciplines.

Participants also expressed clear examples of actual behavioral change in their journal entries. These expressions were documented consistently across all intervention phases, indicating the intervention had a clear mechanism driving the change. Given the relevance of these behavioral change expressions to the project hypothesis, they were coded into five analytical codes. An example of a participant journal reference coded to “habit or practice change” came from Participant 618-13 as they shared how they practiced the worship activation technique that was taught during the skill-based segment of session two. They wrote,

When I practiced worship this week I drove a little deeper. I picked a scripture and made it into a song. The encounter and/or experience was breathtaking. My spirit felt light. Meaning my spirit felt happy! It's hard to put into words what I mean. I felt extremely happy. Refreshed.

The habit or practice change made by this participant was prompted by an activity done during the session but resulted in an actual transformative spiritual experience they were

able to have with God. Skill-based learning driven by experiential learning theory was documented in a participant's own words. This example was only one reference of many. As seen in Figure 7, there were 112 references with behavioral change expressions identified in the journal responses alone.

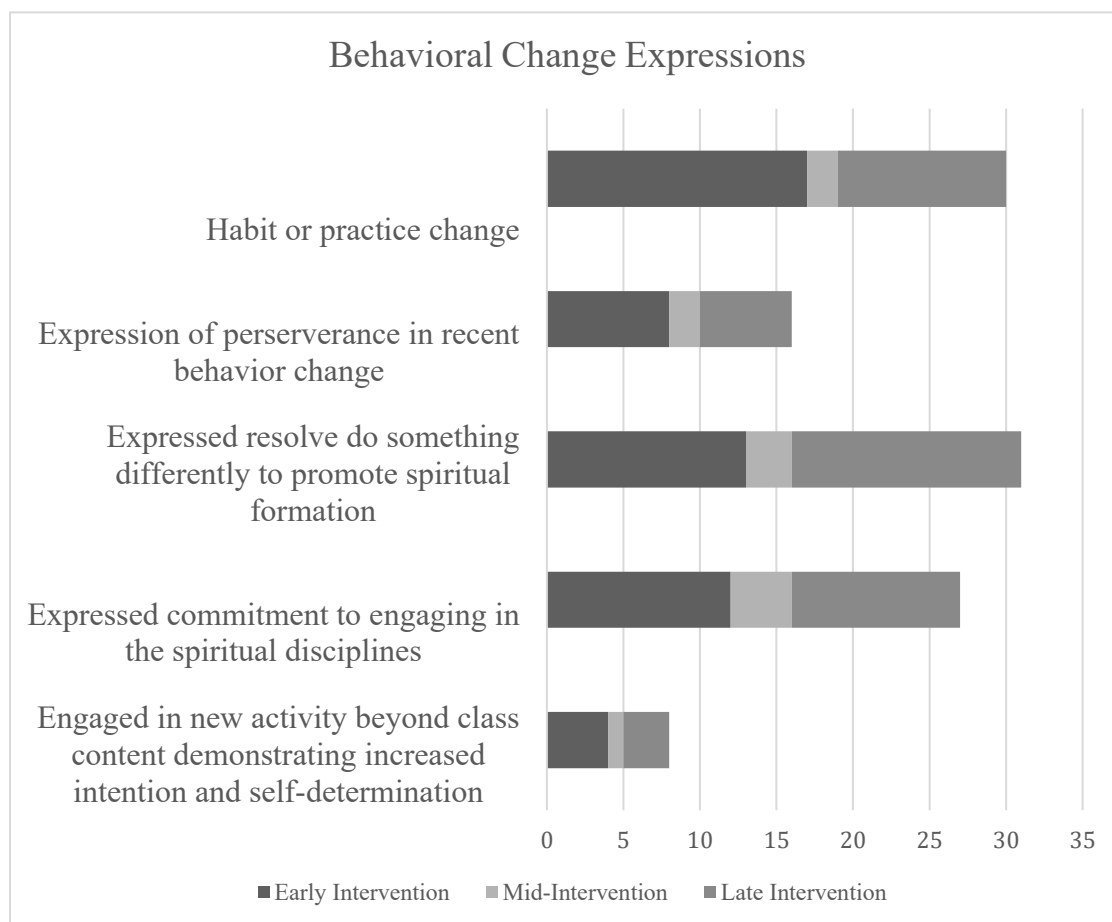


Figure 7. Chart showing number of coded references citing expressions of behavioral change

The behavioral change expressions found throughout participant journals represent real spiritual formation that pastors and Christian education leaders across the church desire to promote in their congregants, but they need insight into how to do so. The last section of this summary of learnings will review how NVivo's analytic tools were leveraged to integrate qualitative and quantitative data collected and provide



definitive evidence that skill-based instruction was the primary mechanism for the affective, cognitive, and conative change experienced by the participants in this project.

*Skill-based Education as the Mechanism for Change*

This project hypothesized that if congregants participate in a skill-based educational training on key spiritual disciplines, then they will be equipped with methodologies to implement those disciplines. Skill-based instruction was anticipated to be a mechanism for increasing the participants knowledge and comfort-level engaging in the spiritual disciplines independently. Question one of the project questionnaires asked participants, “How knowledgeable and comfortable are you regarding practicing the Christian spiritual disciplines at home or independently (i.e. prayer, meditation, personal bible study, fasting, worship)?” The response options were presented as a Likert scale and included: “Not at all knowledgeable and comfortable,” “Slightly knowledgeable and comfortable,” “Somewhat knowledgeable and comfortable,” “Moderately knowledgeable and comfortable,” and “Very knowledgeable and comfortable.” Each response option was assigned a numerical value of one through five, respectively. The median percentage change between pre-intervention scores and post-intervention scores across the participant group on this question was 25%, indicating significant support for the hypothesis.

However, the most compelling analysis of the impact that the independent variable, skill-based education, had on the dependent variable, implementing spiritual discipline practice, was one that explored the correlation between resonance with the skill-based educational approach and conative change in participants. To complete that

analysis, each participant needed an objective skill-based resonance (SBR) score based on the participant data. For the purposes of the analysis, the total number of journal references each participant had across a specific group of skill-based resonance-related codes was assigned as their SBR score. Examples of codes included in the SBR score include: “expressed appreciation for a concrete experience in class,” “skill-based element of class resonated the most,” and “expressed appreciation for relational and communal aspect of skill-based learning.” As an example of the coding procedure, Participant 618-20 wrote, “The class activity that stood out for me was when we did the silence and solitude walk around going to the different stations” in their week one journal entry and it was assigned to the analytical code “skill-based element of class resonated the most.”

To complete the correlation analysis, participants also needed a Conative Change Score to compare the SBR score to. For the analysis, the Conative Change Score was a participant’s total number of coded references assigned to the Conative Change category in NVivo, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. See the codebook in the appendix for the full list. Once each participant had an SBR score and a Conative Change Score, Pearson’s correlation coefficient formula was applied across the two data ranges. The analysis revealed that the correlation coefficient, or  $r$ , equaled 0.54. Correlation coefficients range from -1 to 1. An  $r$  of 0.30 represents a small signal that there is a positive relationship between two variables, whereas an  $r$  of 0.50 demonstrates a clear, moderate positive relationship.<sup>17</sup> Given an  $r$  of 0.54, the statistical analysis confirmed a substantial positive relationship between the two variables. Among participants, as skill-

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce Ratner, “The Correlation Coefficient: Its Values Range between +1/-1, or Do They?,” *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing* 17, no. 2 (June 2009): 140, <https://doi.org/10.1057/jt.2009.5>.

based resonance scores increased, conative change scores increased. Strengthening this conclusion, the *p*-value for the two variables is 0.013. Any *p*-value of <0.05 is considered statistically significant. So, for this correlation analysis, the relationship between skill-based resonance and the conative change in participants has less than a 1.3% likelihood of being the result of random chance.

The data outlined in this chapter provides clear evidence of the efficacy of the project. However, given that lessons plans administered during the project involved both knowledge-based education and skill-based education segments, skeptics could assume that both types of educational approaches were equally responsible for the project results. To find out if that assumption might be incorrect, I used NVivo's matrix query tool along with Excel's data analysis features to compare skill-based resonance, cognitive change, and conative change. It enabled comparison of the impact that cognitive change, indicative of knowledge-based education resonance, and the impact that skill-based resonance had on the conative change level of participants.

For the purposes of this analysis, cognitive change scores were quantified as the difference between the pre-intervention score and the post-intervention score for the item on the original questionnaire that asked, "What is the relationship between spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines?" As a reminder, participant responses to this question were coded within NVivo. Responses indicating "incorrect understanding" and "no understanding" were assigned a score of zero. Responses showing a "limited understanding" were assigned a score of one. Responses indicating a "moderate understanding" were given a score of three. Responses demonstrating a "strong understanding" were assigned a score of five. Skill-based resonance scores (SBR), as

mentioned earlier in the chapter, were determined by the total number of journal references each participant had across a specific group of skill-based resonance-related codes.

After calculating both types of scores, each participant was categorized as having high, medium, or low conative change to analyze the effects of knowledge-based resonance (cognitive change) and skill-based resonance. To assign SBR and cognitive change levels to each participant, the percentile function in Excel was leveraged to identify the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of the participant scores. For the cognitive change scores, the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the data was a 0, the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile was 2.50, and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile was 4. So, scores of 0 or 1 were considered “low,” 2 or 3 were considered “medium,” and 4 or 5 were considered “high.” For the SBR scores, the 25th percentile was a 2.75, the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile was a 5, and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile was a 7. So, scores of 3 or less were considered “low,” 4 to 6 were considered “medium,” and 7 or more were considered “high.” Finally, once participants were assigned their SBR and cognitive change level, an average of the conative change scores based on their levels was calculated. Figure 8 visualizes all of these different data points. Each cell in the matrix records how many participants fell in each intersection of SBR score versus cognitive change score. The average of the conative change scores for participants in those same intersections is indicated in parentheses next to the number of participants (frequency). Finally, a color scale was added where the cell color intensifies with stronger conative change outcomes.

**Skill-based Resonance x Cognitive Change x Conative Change**

|                                         | Cognitive Change<br>Level - Low | Cognitive Change<br>Level - Medium | Cognitive Change<br>Level - High |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Skill-Based Resonance<br>Level - Low    | 2 (12.50)                       | 2 (8.50)                           | 2 (10.00)                        |
| Skill-Based Resonance<br>Level - Medium | 3 (11.00)                       | 2 (16.00)                          | 2 (17.50)                        |
| Skill-Based Resonance<br>Level - High   | 3 (20.67)                       | 0 (0.00)                           | 4 (16.50)                        |

Figure 8: A matrix illustrating SBR, cognitive change, and conative change

Participants who had the most references indicating resonance with skill-based instruction had the highest average conative change. Notably, participants with medium SBR and a low cognitive change level still demonstrated significant conative change (behavioral activation), which affirms that the mechanism for the project's outcomes was the skill-based instruction. This is even further illustrated in the chart where we see that participants with relatively high cognitive change level (medium or high), but who had low SBR, had the lowest average conative change score within the class. Though, the strongest inference in support of the project hypothesis seen in the matrix above was that the participants with low cognitive change and high SBR had the highest average conative change score (20.67), indicating that skill-based education was the mechanism for change. Those three participants started and ended the project with the same level of cognitive understanding about the main concepts the project addressed, but it was the skill-based educational approach that turned information into action and existing knowledge into actual transformation.

## Conclusion

This project represented the capstone of a journey. Engaging in the deliberative work of introspection, assessment, development, implementation, and reflection throughout the project sharpened my insight into the needs of the project context, as well as the needs of the church more broadly. The church's need and capability, as evidenced by this project, to incorporate transformational approaches to pastoral leadership and spiritual formation was made clear.

The project endeavored to address the over-reliance on traditional educational approaches to teach and engage believers about key practical areas of Christian life. It examined how congregants, as well as senior pastoral leadership, would respond to a unique ministry model wrapped inside of a doctoral study. Ultimately, the results were definitive, and the hypothesis was confirmed. Skill-based education is a proven mechanism for enhancing the efficacy and impact of spiritual formation ministry.

In preparing to implement a unique and transformative ministry model that would meet a need within the project context, extensive research was undertaken to inform and develop the model. Each foundational chapter served as a pillar on which the project was built. By purposefully incorporating the academic insights from the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary chapters into the project's execution, the research was linked directly to practical ministry experiences. It enabled theory to truly inform practice.

Speaking of ministry practice, the actual implementation of the project went well. Context associates provided essential support to ensure the skill-based classroom was set up and prepared for participants upon their arrival and in place throughout sessions. With

pedagogy being a variable of the project hypothesis, preparation of lesson plans well in advance of class proved to be an especially important element of the project's success. It is also a key factor that any ministry desiring to implement a skill-based educational model into a portion of their Christian education needs to prioritize.

As shared in the summary of learnings, resonance with the skill-based approach was correlated with actual change in the lives of participants. This was a recurring sentiment expressed in the focus group discussion convened post-intervention. Participant 618-16 shared, "I'm an auditory hands-on person. So, it's kind of like, right up my alley. I enjoyed being able to have the examples and the applications there, because the examples of the application really help you be able to dive deep into it as opposed to just surface." Many scholars and ministry practitioners interested in this area of work assume that most congregants sitting in pews are generally familiar with the spiritual disciplines. However, as discussed in chapter four, many believers have reached a pinnacle in their spiritual formation and have become stagnant in their walk. They are not experiencing ongoing spiritual formation that more frequent and more quality spiritual experiences bring. This is where the crux of this project comes in. Longtime Christians often know about the spiritual disciplines in theory, but not in practice. One participant expressed this sentiment during the focus group discussion sharing, "Most of us probably already did a lot of these disciplines, but to get the breakdown of what they really meant and to see it in action definitely made it come full circle for me, so I appreciated that part." Skill-based instruction empowered this participant to make connections in their spiritual formation journey that they were able to personally recognize and hopefully will continue to build upon.

As a pastoral leader, from my perspective, one of the largest and most important needs that the skill-based educational model would support the church to meet would be the need for community. This is especially relevant to the Western church where rugged individualism and segregated Sunday mornings prevail. The early Christian church relied heavily on community to survive and to thrive. The Pietists drew on this principle and infused community into their education model as a result. Throughout this project's implementation, the vulnerability, transparency, mutual accountability and learning, as well as small group nature of the class, provided an environment conducive to spiritual growth. Participant 618-19 expounded on this in great detail during their individual participant interview stating the following about the need for the ministry model to continue at the project context, Dayspring Family Church,

It's important for our growth, not just as individuals, but as a community. I think it gives you more, more insight or more discernment when it comes to what's going on in the church community. Stuff that may be going on with an individual...there have been times, where I've stood in church, and I am dying inside. And nobody picked up on that...that small group setting is where we are all clear of our goal to grow. We feel safe to share things like that.

Ultimately, what that participant expressed is the real work and purpose of congregational spiritual formation ministry. The church is tasked with supporting the spiritual formation of believers throughout their entire lifetime. This project demonstrated that the educational approaches utilized by churches do have an impact on the efficacy of the work we are called to do as church leaders. Future research stemming from this project would ideally explore whether the skill-based educational approach is just as efficacious in teaching other topics or concepts related to spiritual growth that are not as practical as spiritual disciplines. However, given the importance of the spiritual disciplines in the lives of all believers, it is my hope that this thesis serves as a resource



for those desiring to incorporate a transformative ministry model that was proven to effectively promote spiritual formation and growth within a congregation.

**APPENDIX A**  
**PROJECT FLYER**

FROM PRACTICE TO PRESENCE: EXPERIENCING CHRIST  
THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

**A SIX-WEEK DOCTORAL PROJECT**

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
FACILITATOR: ELDER CHAENA HOLLIST

**EDUCATING, ENGAGING, AND EDIFYING THROUGH EXPERIENCES:  
A TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUAL FORMATION MINISTRY MODEL**



JUNE 25, 2025—AUGUST 6, 2025  
WEDNESDAYS— 7:00PM-8:30PM  
DAYSPRING FAMILY CHURCH

CLASS SEATS ARE LIMITED, PLEASE REGISTER PROMPTLY  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM IS REQUIRED  
ADULT BELIEVERS OF ALL AGES AND STAGES ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE

**PLEASE SEE ELDER HOLLIST TO REGISTER OR GO TO  
[BIT.LY/FPTREGISTRATION](https://bit.ly/fptregistration)**

**APPENDIX B****INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

United Theological Seminary  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Investigator Name: Chaena Hollist

Contact Information: Email – [chollist1@united.edu](mailto:chollist1@united.edu)

Introduction: I am a doctoral student at United Theological Seminary.

Purpose: I am conducting a study on a transformational ministry model for equipping believers to practice the spiritual disciplines and promote their spiritual growth. This project was developed to address a ministry need at my local church.

Requirements for Participation: You are invited to participate because you are a believer in Christ at Dayspring Family Church and over 18 years old.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to fully engage in a six-week program that will have weekly sessions on Wednesday evenings at Dayspring Family Church from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. Participants will also be asked to complete a pre-project survey before the project starts and post-project survey at the end of the project, focused journaling between sessions, participate in a focus group discussion, and participate in an optional individual interview with me at the end of the project.

Human Subject participation:

All the participants must consent to be in the study, and participants must be protected and treated fairly throughout the study. Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant during the study, must provide a doctor's note for their safety, since they are considered a protected class (i.e., vulnerable population) by the Federal Law.

Risks:

The risks associated with this study are minimal. You may experience mild discomfort during reflection or discussions about spiritual health during surveys or journaling due to the nature of personal growth. Additionally, periods of significant spiritual formation may bring about new spiritual experiences. An ordained elder of Dayspring Family Church will be available as a member of the project team for debriefing any experiences that a participant may have during the project duration.

Benefits:

Spiritual Growth and Formation

Participants of this study will receive biblically and theologically sound Christian education, resources, and tools that will support and equip them in their spiritual formation and spiritual development journey toward becoming increasingly more like Christ.

Personal Growth and Reflection

Questionnaires, surveys, journaling questions, and class activities will provide participants with opportunities to reflect on their current behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions related to their Christian

faith. This self-reflection will lead to increased self-awareness, personal growth, and a clearer understanding of their goals and priorities.

#### Opportunity to Advance the Kingdom of God

Participants will also support the advancement of the body of Christ by providing their responses and perspectives via surveys, journals, discussions and interviews, as it will support research that informs the global Church. It will enable the publishing of an academic dissertation that churches around the world can reference for insight into a ministry model for promoting the spiritual formation and the implementation of spiritual disciplines by congregants.

#### Voluntariness:

Participation is voluntary and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. You can also stop participating at any time. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your involvement or membership at Dayspring Family Church. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please contact me directly in person, on the phone, or by email. My contact information is at the top of this consent form. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

#### Confidentiality:

We will be careful to keep your information confidential, and we will ask you and all the focus group members to keep class discussions confidential as well. The class sessions, focus group, and individual interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept private. I will be the only one with access to your information. Digital files will be encrypted and password protected. Physical data will be stored in a locked storage box in my home office desk. All participants will be assigned a participant ID that will be used as the identifier on all data collected from them. Names will not be added to any project data. There is always a small risk of unwanted or accidental disclosure, but mitigation of that risk is a paramount priority.

#### Summary:

**This transformational study is designed to equip believers with information, insight, tools, and experiences that will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of participants.** I am committed to providing a healthy, safe, and effective learning environment for everyone participating. If you have any questions about the research study please contact me.

#### Signature:

Signing this paper means that you have read it or had it read to you, and that you desire to be in the study. If you do not desire to be in the study, please do not sign this consent form. Being in the study is up to you. There will be no hard feelings if you do not decide to participate or even if you change your mind later. By signing this form, you agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what it will involve.

---

Signature of Person Agreeing to  
Participate in the Project/Study

---

Date Signed

**APPENDIX C****PRE AND POST COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Course Questionnaire

**Participant ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Please answer the questions below. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer. This is meant to measure your current understanding and behavior regarding the topics addressed in the course. Please answer honestly and transparently. Remember, your responses are confidential.

1. How would you define spiritual formation?

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2. What is the relationship between spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines?

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3. How knowledgeable and comfortable are you regarding practicing the Christian spiritual disciplines at home or independently? (i.e., prayer, meditation, personal bible study, fasting, worship).

|            |          |          |            |      |
|------------|----------|----------|------------|------|
| 1          | 2        | 3        | 4          | 5    |
| Not at all | Slightly | Somewhat | Moderately | Very |

4. How frequently do you engage in practicing the Christian spiritual disciplines at home or independently?

|            |                  |                   |                  |              |       |
|------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|-------|
| 1          | 2                | 3                 | 4                | 5            | 6     |
| Not at all | Few times a year | Few times a month | Few times a week | Almost daily | Daily |



5. How would you define knowledge-based learning?

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6. How would you define skill-based learning?

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7. Do you think that the educational style/approach used in churches impacts the spiritual growth and development of church members? Why or why not?

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## **APPENDIX D**

### **DAILY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES SCALE**

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

### Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale

The list that follows includes items you may or may not experience. Please consider how often you directly have this experience, and try to disregard whether you feel you should or should not have these experiences. A number of items use the word 'God.' If this word is not a comfortable one for you, please substitute another word that calls to mind the divine or holy for you.

|                                                                                                                 | Many<br>times<br>a day | Every<br>day | Most<br>days | Some<br>days | Once<br>in a<br>while | Never |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------|
| I feel God's presence.                                                                                          |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I experience a connection to all of life.                                                                       |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns. |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I find strength in my religion or spirituality.                                                                 |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.                                                                  |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I feel deep inner peace or harmony.                                                                             |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.                                                          |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.                                                          |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I feel God's love for me, directly.                                                                             |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I feel God's love for me, through others.                                                                       |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.                                                             |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I feel thankful for my blessings.                                                                               |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I feel a selfless caring for others.                                                                            |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.                                                     |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |
| I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine.                                                       |                        |              |              |              |                       |       |

|                                           | Not at all | Somewhat<br>close | Very<br>close | As close as possible |
|-------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| In general, how close do you feel to God? |            |                   |               |                      |

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale © Lynn G. Underwood [www.dsescscale.org](http://www.dsescscale.org)

Do not copy without permission of the author.

Underwood, L.G. 2006. Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Qualitative Research, Interpretive Guidelines, and Population Distribution for the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion/ Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, 28:1 181-218.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

### **Focus Group Discussion**

1. How was the kingdom and community building exercise we just completed?
2. Why do you think the early church emphasized community, fellowship, small group study, and peer accountability when it came to walking out their faith?
3. What did you find most valuable about participating in this six-week training course?
4. What topics, activities, or assignments were particularly helpful or relevant to your needs?
5. What are your thoughts on the training structure and format?
6. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall learning experience?

## **APPENDIX F**

### **INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Individual Participant Interview Questions**

1. Can you share any key takeaways or insights you gained from participating in the project?
2. What were your initial expectations for this training and how did it meet or exceed them?
3. What specific skills or knowledge did you gain from the six-week training course?
4. Do you believe this particular intervention would be helpful to other churches and believers? Why or why not?
5. Were there any survey or journaling questions that you found unclear or confusing? If so, which one?
6. What suggestions do you have for improving the study design or procedures?
7. Do you have any other questions or feedback about the project

**APPENDIX G**  
NVIVO CODEBOOK



## NVIVO Codebook

| <b>Code Name</b>                                                                                                                                           | <b>Code Type</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Affective Change</b>                                                                                                                                    | Analytical       |
| <b>Affective Change\Change in emotions</b>                                                                                                                 | Analytical       |
| Affective Change\Change in emotions\Negative emotional state expressed                                                                                     | Analytical       |
| Affective Change\Change in emotions\Positive emotional state expressed                                                                                     | Analytical       |
| <b>Affective Change\Change in sense of connectedness and closeness to God</b>                                                                              | Analytical       |
| Affective Change\Change in sense of connectedness and closeness to God\Decreased sense of connection or closeness to God                                   | Analytical       |
| Affective Change\Change in sense of connectedness and closeness to God\Increased sense of connection and closeness to God                                  | Analytical       |
| <b>Affective Change\Expressed experiencing a spiritual breakthrough or transformative moment</b>                                                           | Analytical       |
| <b>Affective Change\Increase in desire for God's presence and influence</b>                                                                                | Analytical       |
| <b>Affective Change\Increased desire for spiritual formation</b>                                                                                           | Analytical       |
| <b>Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed</b>                                                                                   | Analytical       |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\Cited cluttered thought life as barrier in time with God                                 | Analytical       |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\cited demands on time as a barrier to practicing spiritual disciplines                   | Analytical       |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\cited feeling like they didn't know how to fast correctly as a barrier in the past       | Analytical       |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\cited life being rough as a barrier to quality time with God                             | Analytical       |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\cited medical considerations as a barrier to fasting in the conventional sense           | Analytical       |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\Cited physical challenges or lack of energy as a barrier during time with God            | Analytical       |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\cited tendency to overthink their relationship to God as a barrier to practicing silence | Analytical       |

|                                                                                                                                                              |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\Cited that time with God occurred but was brief                                            | Analytical |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\Distractions cited as a barrier to engaging in spiritual disciplines                       | Analytical |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\Expressed difficulty or challenge with no specific reason or barrier cited                 | Analytical |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\has leveraged disciplines to cope with life's challenges rather than as a regular practice | Analytical |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\Mind racing whenever engaging in silence                                                   | Analytical |
| Barrier or challenge implementing spiritual disciplines expressed\Preferred discipline of worship be practiced within community rather than alone            | Analytical |
| <b>Cognitive Change</b>                                                                                                                                      | Analytical |
| <b>Cognitive Change\Spiritual insights gained</b>                                                                                                            | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Spiritual insights gained\Appreciated new insight or revelation from knowledge-based segment of class                                       | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Spiritual insights gained\Increased insight into the importance of spiritual formation for believers                                        | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Spiritual insights gained\Increased insight into the practice of the spiritual disciplines                                                  | Analytical |
| <b>Cognitive Change\Understanding of KBE</b>                                                                                                                 | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of KBE\Incorrect understanding of KBE                                                                                         | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of KBE\Limited understanding of KBE                                                                                           | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of KBE\Moderate understanding of KBE                                                                                          | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of KBE\No understanding of KBE                                                                                                | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of KBE\Strong understanding of KBE                                                                                            | Analytical |
| <b>Cognitive Change\Understanding of SBE</b>                                                                                                                 | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of SBE\Incorrect understanding of SBE                                                                                         | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of SBE\Limited understanding of SBE                                                                                           | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of SBE\Moderate understanding of SBE                                                                                          | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of SBE\No understanding of SBE                                                                                                | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of SBE\Strong understanding of SBE                                                                                            | Analytical |
| <b>Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual disciplines</b>                                                                                               | Analytical |

|                                                                                                                                                     |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\Incorrect understanding of spiritual disciplines                                            | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\Limited understanding of spiritual disciplines                                              | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\Moderate understanding of spiritual disciplines                                             | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\No understanding of spiritual disciplines                                                   | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\Strong understanding of spiritual disciplines                                               | Analytical |
| <b>Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual formation</b>                                                                                        | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual formation\Incorrect understanding of spiritual formation                                                | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual formation\Limited understanding of spiritual formation                                                  | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual formation\Moderate understanding of spiritual formation                                                 | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual formation\No understanding of spiritual formation                                                       | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of spiritual formation\Strong understanding of spiritual formation                                                   | Analytical |
| <b>Cognitive Change\Understanding of the impact of educational approach</b>                                                                         | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of the impact of educational approach\Limited insight to the impact of educational approach                          | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of the impact of educational approach\Moderate insight to the impact of educational approach                         | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of the impact of educational approach\No insight to the impact of educational approach                               | Analytical |
| Cognitive Change\Understanding of the impact of educational approach\Strong insight to the impact of educational approach                           | Analytical |
| <b>Conative Change</b>                                                                                                                              | Analytical |
| <b>Conative Change\Behavioral change expressions</b>                                                                                                | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Behavioral change expressions\Engaged in new activity beyond class content demonstrating increased intention and self-determination | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Behavioral change expressions\Expressed commitment to engaging in the spiritual disciplines                                         | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Behavioral change expressions\Expressed desire for spiritual formation or growth                                                    | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Behavioral change expressions\Expressed resolve to do something differently to promote spiritual formation                          | Analytical |

|                                                                                                                                               |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Conative Change\Behavioral change expressions\Expression of perseverance in recent behavior change                                            | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Behavioral change expressions\Habit or practice change                                                                        | Analytical |
| <b>Conative Change\Change in comfort level with practicing spiritual disciplines</b>                                                          | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Change in comfort level with practicing spiritual disciplines\Decrease in comfort level with practicing spiritual disciplines | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Change in comfort level with practicing spiritual disciplines\Increase in comfort level practicing spiritual disciplines      | Analytical |
| <b>Conative Change\Frequency of practice</b>                                                                                                  | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Frequency of practice\Decreased frequency of practicing spiritual disciplines                                                 | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Frequency of practice\Increased frequency of practicing disciplines                                                           | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Frequency of practice\Participant confirmed engaging in implementing the spiritual disciplines in previous 7 days             | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Frequency of practice\Participant did not engage in spiritual discipline featured in class                                    | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Frequency of practice\Participant did not engage in weekly discipline but expressed intention to                              | Analytical |
| <b>Conative Change\Quality of practice</b>                                                                                                    | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Quality of practice\Decreased quality of spiritual experiences                                                                | Analytical |
| Conative Change\Quality of practice\Increased quality of spiritual experiences                                                                | Analytical |
| <b>Impact of Educational Approach</b>                                                                                                         | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\believes project model would be beneficial to other churches                                                   | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\Expressed appreciation for a concrete experience in class                                                      | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\Expressed appreciation for deliberate practice aspect of skill-based education                                 | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\Expressed appreciation for new knowledge gained                                                                | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\Expressed appreciation for relational and communal aspects of skill-based learning                             | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\Expressed class exceeded expectations                                                                          | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\Knowledge-based element resonated most                                                                         | Analytical |
| Impact of Educational Approach\skill-based element of class resonated the most                                                                | Analytical |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                         |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Impact of Educational Approach\suggested the project educational model be implemented ongoing in the context                                                                                            | Analytical  |
| <b>(RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines</b>                                                                                                                         | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines</b>                                                                                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\believes discipline is gleaned from God's word, sermons and Bible studies               | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\defines spiritual disciplines as daily practices                                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\defines spiritual disciplines as how we are to treat others                             | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\Defines spiritual disciplines as intentionally following through with devotion plans    | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\defines spiritual disciplines as practicing and lining up with God or His Word          | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\defines spiritual disciplines as prayer and bible study                                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\defines spiritual disciplines as spiritual acts to develop our relationship with Christ | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\defines spiritual disciplines as the manner and frequency something is carried out      | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\defines spiritual disciplines as the outward result of spiritual formation              | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\desires more effective practice of silence and solitude to hear Jesus more clearly      | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual                                                                                                     | Descriptive |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| disciplines\expressed desire to be more intentional with the spiritual disciplines                                                                                                                              |             |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\realized spiritual disciplines equip us for ministry to others                                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\realizes practicing spiritual disciplines is not selfish but rather they are restoring          | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual disciplines\spiritual disciplines support spiritual formation                                               | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation</b>                                                                                            | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as a guide to live and mature by                                      | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as a spirit-led activity where God aligns us with his plan            | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as alignment with the Holy Spirit                                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as becoming more like Christ and being in right relationship with him | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as being close to God                                                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as being shaped into God's image through the spiritual disciplines    | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as belief in God and practicing certain spiritual disciplines         | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as desire to become like-Christ                                       | Descriptive |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                      |             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as displaying Christ-like behaviors                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as how they connect and relate with God                    | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as obedience to God                                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\Defines spiritual formation as order and alignment with God                            | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as practices that cause us to reflect the image of Christ  | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as practicing the spiritual disciplines and helping others | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\Defines spiritual formation as setting a schedule of time with God                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as the beginning stage of one's walk with Christ           | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as the example of how we should treat others               | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as the growth of your spiritual walk with God              | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as the presence of and submission to the Godhead           | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as the process of becoming more like Christ                | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual                                                                                                  | Descriptive |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                       |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| formation\defines spiritual formation as the process of conforming to the image of God or Christ                                                                                                      |             |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as the process where Christians build their faith in Christ | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\defines spiritual formation as the way you handle your spiritual life                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\not familiar with the term spiritual formation at all                                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ1) Understanding of the purpose and practice of spiritual disciplines\Understanding of spiritual formation\unsure of the relationship between spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation        | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach</b>                                                                                                                                          | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\appreciated the visual elements of SBE approach                                                                                                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes churches should consider people have different learning styles                                                                         | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes educational style used in churches allows learning God's word like the traditional classroom                                           | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes ELT promotes spiritual development                                                                                                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes SBE increases ability to apply what they learn in church                                                                               | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes small group worship moments would be great to incorporate into worship service                                                         | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes that educational approach of churches impacts spiritual growth                                                                         | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes that learning in church should be implemented into daily life                                                                          | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\believes that using different educational styles helps people understand the word more deeply                                                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\cited the community learning and small group aspect of SBE as impactful                                                                         | Descriptive |



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\expressed an appreciation for Christian education generally but not educational approach                                                                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\impacts ability for church growth and development due to limits in member knowledge                                                                          | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\learns better in a hands-on and applied learning environment than just lecture or reading                                                                    | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\likes to be able to have questions answered                                                                                                                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\sees benefit of practical education but not sure if there is a connection to spiritual matters                                                               | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\sees traditional educational approach used in churches as insufficient                                                                                       | Descriptive |
| (RQ2) Understanding of impact of educational approach\unsure whether educational approach of church impacts spiritual growth of members                                                                            | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines</b>                                                                                                                                                 | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines</b>                                                                                    | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\did not practice the spiritual discipline discussed in class                              | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\did not practice the spiritual discipline discussed in class but intends to in the future | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\expressed intending to try fasting again but has had challenges doing it in the past      | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\has not been spending time with God after dealing with a life crisis                      | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\intended to practice bible intake before bed but tends to fall asleep                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\intended to practice fasting but got distracted                                           | Descriptive |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\medical reasons impacted ability to implement fasting discipline in conventional sense   | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\Practicing disciplines during week was challenging but still did                         | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\Spent time with God but the quality could have been better                               | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\time with God was distracted                                                             | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\time with God was present but inconsistent                                               | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Experienced a barrier or challenge to practicing disciplines\wanted to try practicing the discipline of silence but mind races constantly when silent | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Frequency of Practice</b>                                                                                                                          | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Frequency of Practice\expressed a goal to practice the spiritual disciplines regularly                                                                | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Frequency of Practice\Expressed actually practicing spiritual disciplines routinely in previous week                                                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Frequency of Practice\Expressed pursuing regular practice of spiritual disciplines                                                                    | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Frequency of Practice\frequency of time with God has increased                                                                                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Frequency of Practice\Practiced the spiritual discipline discussed in class                                                                           | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice</b>                                                                                                                            | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\expressed being more intentional about time spent with God                                                                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\has seen personal growth because of time with God                                                                                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\independent practice of the                                                                                                       | Descriptive |

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| discipline using training concepts was different, unique, or impactful                                                                                                      |             |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\Leveraged the spiritual disciplines discussed as a resource for navigating life challenges* | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\through practice learned how to improve the quality of time spent with God                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\time with God has prompted feelings of awe                                                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\time with God place of comfort and peace                                                    | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\time with God present but brief                                                             | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\time with God was strengthening                                                             | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\time with God was substantive and good quality                                              | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Quality of Practice\time with God was transformative                                                            | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Type of Practice Cited</b>                                                                                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Type of Practice Cited\bible intake has become a source of spiritual nourishment                                | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Type of Practice Cited\Class prompted further exploration on practicing the focus disciplines                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Type of Practice Cited\prayer has been used when necessary due to life challenges rather than as a routine      | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Type of Practice Cited\Praying the scripture particularly resonated                                             | Descriptive |
| (RQ3) Application and Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines\Type of Practice Cited\spiritual discipline practice relied heavily on silence and listening for God's voice    | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training</b>                                                                                                                            | Descriptive |
| <b>Affective Change</b>                                                                                                                                                     | Descriptive |

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| <b>(RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Affective Change</b>                                                                                      | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Affective Change\expressed desire for cleansing or holiness                                                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Affective Change\expressed desire for closer relationship with God                                           | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Affective Change\Expressed feeling more peace and strength                                                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Affective Change\increased desire for clarity and guidance from God                                          | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Affective Change\Increased desire to be in God's presence                                                    | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Affective Change\the things of God and His word have taken on new level of importance                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\expressed enjoyment of class                                                                                 | Descriptive |
| <b>Cognitive Change</b>                                                                                                                                | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Cognitive Change</b>                                                                                      | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Cognitive Change\Appreciated a new insight or biblical revelation                                            | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Cognitive Change\believes training would be beneficial to other churches                                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Cognitive Change\better understanding of who God is                                                          | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Cognitive Change\element of the training surfaced a spiritual challenge or barrier                           | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Cognitive Change\Enjoyed learning elements of church history                                                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Cognitive Change\training reminded them of the importance of engaging in the spiritual disciplines regularly | Descriptive |
| <b>Conative Change</b>                                                                                                                                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Conative Change                                                                                              | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Conative Change\Expressed desire for an increase in the quality of their time with God                       | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Conative Change\expressed desire to implement project model permanently in the church                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Conative Change\expressed desire to reflect Jesus in their daily life                                        | Descriptive |

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| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Conative Change\Expressed increased comfort-level with engaging in spiritual disciplines                                                                         | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Conative Change\increase in frequency of practicing spiritual disciplines                                                                                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Conative Change\Increase in quality of time with God                                                                                                             | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Skill-Based Education Resonance</b>                                                                                                                           |             |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Skill-Based Education Resonance\Appreciated the relational and community-building aspects of the training                                                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Skill-Based Education Resonance\experiential activity done in class resonated the most                                                                           | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Skill-Based Education Resonance\Expressed appreciation for the accountability that journaling provided                                                           | Descriptive |
| (RQ4) Impact and outcomes of the training\Skill-Based Education Resonance\Skill-based element of class prompted a self-reported mental or spiritual transformation or Aha Moment                           | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches</b>                                                                                                                       | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach</b>                                                                                  | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\believes KBE involves acquiring information visually or orally                          | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as absorbing and memorizing information                                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as applying things studied to daily life                                    | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\Defines KBE as book-based learning                                                      | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as broadly as exploring things learned at church or in personal bible study | Descriptive |

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| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as info learned through research or reading and teaching          | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as information obtained on a specific topic                       | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as learning based in facts, theory and theology                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as learning from life experiences                                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as learning from school or institutional settings                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as learning just to know something                                | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as learning more about something you already know                 | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as learning with intention                                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as learning, retaining, and being able to apply it                | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as reading, studying and researching, and applying what you learn | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as someone who has knowledge on the topic being taught            | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as the know-how and why something is necessary to learn           | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as theory                                                         | Descriptive |

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| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Knowledge-based Educational Approach\defines KBE as understanding the foundation of a lesson           | Descriptive |
| <b>(RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach</b>                                                                | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\believes SBE is learning more about something you already do well     | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defined SBE as practical or job-related skills                        | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as building on a skill you already have                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\Defines SBE as hands-on learning                                      | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as higher education at an institution                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as innate or natural gifts or skills                      | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as learning a skill                                       | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as learning based in facts, research and training         | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as learning by example in order to apply the information  | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as learning in order to gain something from the knowledge | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as learning that is put into practice                     | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as learning to where you are able to teach others on it   | Descriptive |

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| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as practical application                   | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as practices taught to facilitate learning | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as quality and experienced learning        | Descriptive |
| (RQ5) Understanding of Knowledge-Based and Skill-based Educational Approaches\Skill-based Educational Approach\defines SBE as working with your hands                 | Descriptive |
|                                                                                                                                                                       | Descriptive |



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